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JULY 24 1981

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## LITERATURE

## Across the dark era

By Michael Irwin

### CZESLAW MILOSZ:

*The Issa Valley*

Translated by Louis Iribarne

288pp. Sidgwick and Jackson/Carcantet New Press. £6.95.

0 283 98762 6

### Native Realm

A Search for Self-Definition

Translated by Catherine S. Leach

300pp. Sidgwick and Jackson/Carcantet New Press. £8.95.

0 283 98782 0

### Bells in Winter

Translated by the author and Lillian Wallace

71pp. Manchester: Carcanet New Press. £2.95.

0 85635 290 X

It is to be hoped that the author's Nobel Prize and the significance of current events in Poland will help to win for these books the response they deserve. Milosz has lived through, and participated in, some of the crucial political happenings of our century. If he had never written a line he would be an intriguing figure merely by virtue of his survival. Since he in fact brought to bear upon his experiences a refined and resilient analytical intelligence, unusually combined with a poet's sensibility, his testimony is of unique importance. Attention must be paid to such a man.

He was born in Lithuania in 1911 and baptized a Catholic. His father, a civil engineer mobilized to build roads and bridges for the Russian army, led a nomadic existence that took the family at one stage almost to the Chinese border. They were in Rjev, near the Volga, when the Revolution began, had moved to Estonia by the time the Germans arrived, and eventually settled in Wilno, soon to become a Polish city. Milosz went to a Catholic school there, and later to the University, where he took a master's degree in law and became the youngest member of an influential literary coterie that founded its own review. His first volume of poems was published in 1933, a second in 1936. In the interim he had spent a year in Paris on a scholarship. After graduating he worked for Polish Radio, first in Wilno and then in Warsaw. He lived in the capital for most of the war, nominally working in the University library, while writing, translating and editing for the underground press, and supplementing his starvation wages by black-market dealings. By a series of chances he survived the Warsaw rising and the reprisals that reduced the city to rubble. After the war he was for several years a Secretary at the Polish Embassy in Washington, but in 1951 he broke with his government and went to Paris, where he eked out a living as a freelance writer. In 1960 he moved to the United States, to become Professor of Slavic Literatures at Berkeley. His work following his original departure, enjoyed a great revival in 1956, but was banned again a year or two later. It was a sign of the times that his Nobel Prize could be officially celebrated in his own country.

*The Issa Valley* is a particularly revealing work in that it displays the intuitions, the doubts and the beliefs that were to shape the author's political thinking, but displays them in a largely apolitical context. It is a story woven loosely from the experiences of a young boy named Thomas, who is living with his grandparents in a remote Lithuanian village. It has the sensuousness and immediacy one associates with novels apparently inspired by the writer's own childhood recollections: *David Copperfield* and *The Mill on the Floss* both come to mind. Like Dickens and Eliot, Milosz has the problem of deriving breadth of meaning from material that might seem too narrowly personal. His solution is to shift recurrently the focus of attention from Thomas to various of his acquaintances in the locality. The

theme of the novel is the attempt, by all these characters, to make sense of the natural life they see around them, and to deduce from it a coherent philosophy to regulate their own actions. As in Hardy's fiction the copious passages of vivid description are not included to provide "background": they are central to the author's purpose. When Thomas sees a grouse shot, or trips a snake, or skins a bird, or visits the apary, his reactions help to mould his developing and sometimes despairing view of the world. Is Man essentially an animal being? Do his sufferings signify no more than those of a hare? It is not only Thomas who is tormented by such questions. One of the local peasants is driven to challenge God's existence with experiments in suicide. A farmer is trapped into murder and self-destruction. In a Hardy novel such melodramatic doings, unguessed variants of the melodrama everywhere visible in nature, are

absent from the work - we have no conception of his social character; impressive in the consistent refusal to sensationalize. "The immensity of events calls for restraint, even dryness", he remarks at the beginning of his chapter about the first year of the war. Elsewhere, skipping a year or two, he mentions that "various personal complications" have been left out of account. But the reticence is more significant than these comments imply. It relates directly to the dualism which informed *The Issa Valley* and which is crucial to Milosz's history of his philosophical and political development.

In a fascinating chapter called "Catholic Education" he describes the schoolboy Milosz as virtually a Manichaean. Since our animal nature makes our mortal ideals unattainable "we should sin out of spite", salvaging the positive by means of the negative. Then and later he found



Czeslaw Milosz

likely to constitute the substance of the story. In *The Issa Valley* they are muted, almost incidental, because the writer is more rigorously concerned with ideas. For all its beauty the Valley is "inhabited by an usually large number of devils", devils that can betray the human residents and plunge them into hopelessness or dread. People act irrationally, commit crimes that were never intended, the root cause being "the discordancy between body and soul". Milosz is everywhere a dualist, dramatizing the antagonism between the self that thinks and the self that feels, between the performing body and the observing mind.

One consequence of this approach is a fruitful duality in the novel itself, an alternation between sensuously evocative episodes and various modes of questioning or reflection. Even in English this is a work of stylistic distinction. The translator has managed to capture the poetic precision of Milosz's vocabulary while achieving an appropriate expressiveness of sound and rhythm: "To wake to a bright babble of birds, first invading his sleep, then growing stronger, the sun blazing through shingles alive with the scratching of tiny claws, the flutter of feathers..." *The Issa Valley* is not only an impressive but an immediately appealing novel.

*Native Realm* seems, at first glance, to have little in common with the tenderness, simplicity, and descriptive richness of the story of childhood. Subtitled "A Search for Self-Definition", it is much more obviously a product of the Milosz who wrote *The Captive Mind*. In a series of essays, very loosely chronological, he describes, and meditates upon, various of his past experiences, providing, as it were, a set of commentaries upon his improbable career. Throughout he maintains a curious austerity, even impersonality, that is both frustrating and impressive: frustrating in that Milosz himself

is absent from the work - we have no conception of his social character; impressive in the consistent refusal to sensationalize. "The immensity of events calls for restraint, even dryness", he remarks at the beginning of his chapter about the first year of the war. Elsewhere, skipping a year or two, he mentions that "various personal complications" have been left out of account. But the reticence is more significant than these comments imply. It relates directly to the dualism which informed *The Issa Valley* and which is crucial to Milosz's history of his philosophical and political development.

This precarious creed could not survive his visit to the Poland of 1949: "ordinary human despair must be given its just due". But Milosz deserted his country reluctantly, and at the expense of great moral and psychological pain. He found no simple solutions in the West. Like *The Captive Mind*, *Native Realm* makes uncomfortable reading because it defines with eloquent precision a dilemma which most Western readers have had the luxury of shuffling. Thomas Hardy's work seems sympathetic today partly for what is called its pessimism - the inference being that pessimism of this sort isn't (after all) hopelessly disagreeable. It becomes a philosophical lay-by where one can pull in to watch the world go past. But what if the pressures of history and geography compel you to keep moving? What if you are obliged to make choices to back any residual trust in evolutionary meliorism with moral capital? In making his wager, in striving to turn his dualism to positive account, Milosz was a representative figure of our times. The schizophrenia he explored is a condition of twentieth-century life.

A review cannot contain the quotations and detailed analysis that would be necessary to an adequate account of the poems assembled in *Bells in Winter*. But the collection reveals a range, authority and (even in translation) a command of vocabulary, cadence and tone appropriate to a major poet. No single work could represent so diverse a group, but "The Fall" shows how Milosz's unobtrusive control of metaphor can make an apparently simple poem dilute upon successive readings:

The death of a man is like the fall of a mighty nation  
That had valiant armies, captains and prophets,  
And wealthy ports and ships over all the seas.  
But now it will not relieve any besieged city.  
It will not enter into any alliance.  
Because its cities are empty, its populace  
disposed;  
Its land once bringing harvest is overgrown with thistles,  
its mission forgotten, its language lost.  
The dialect of a village high upon inaccessible mountains.

What must strike anyone who reads these three volumes successively is the interconnectedness, the homocentricity of Milosz's achievement: one work elucidates another. It would be good for us to have his complete oeuvre available in English.

## Gore Vidal

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"This new novel represents a significant development in the range of Vidal's art."

*The Sunday Times*

## Wilbur Smith

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"It is as rare as most of his other novels a most splendid read."

*Financial Times*

## Nicolas Freeling

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"Quirky, colloquial, hallucinatory, unmistakable Freeling."

*The Sunday Times*

## Ian St. James

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*The Observer*

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*The Daily Telegraph*

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Part 2

The Wilderness Years

"It is impossible to praise too highly Martin Gilbert's impeccable industry and imaginative treatment of this massive material."

*Contemporary Review*

## Heinemann



## Best face forward

By Victoria Glendinning

IRA FURSTENBERG:

Young at Any Age  
Thirty-Three of the World's Most  
Elegant Women Reveal How They  
Stay Beautiful.

186pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.  
£2.95.  
0 297 77921 4

L.J. LUDOVICI:

Cosmetic Scalpel  
The Life of Charles Willi, Beauty  
Surgeon

140pp. Bradford-on-Avon. Wills.  
Moonraker Press. £6.95.  
0 239 08210 5

Princess Ira von Furstenberg, who interviewed thirty-three women for *Young at Any Age*, writes that her attitude to her own looks "changed radically" when she reached forty. "Suddenly I realized that many young men found older women fascinating. Her personal claim to fame, she says, is two-fold: her marriage to Prince Alfonso Hohenzollern-Langenberg at the age of fifteen, and 'my achievement in the field of narcissism'.

Her book is compiled for the benefit of others in the narcissistic field - and there will be a host of golden dallies, since it's no good pretending that it would not be very nice to look as beautiful as some of these famous women look in their photographs. They are all past their first youth and some past their last youth too. Yet they all had good looks to start with, or extraordinary looks (one or two are hideous), and whatever their other gifts their faces have been their fortunes. For Princess Michael of Kent, All MacGraw, Farah Fawcett, Natalie Wood, it is merely a matter of protecting their capital against erosion. The effort is only worth the initial investment was considerable, and in any case there is little for the small investor to learn since the beauty recipes and superstitious rituals described here are so contradictory. It is like reading the clinical case histories of patients suffering from obsessions.

Bianca Jagger and several others recommend drinking a mystical eight glasses of water a day, though this surely has no result other than that which a plumber could have foreseen. Some recommend a regime whose expense would cover a small nation's defence programme, and specific beauticians (spoken of with reverence, like gurus) and products get free testimonials, in particular "Oil of Olay" (sic, whenever cited). Not all their speculations have paid off. Twenty needles injected simultaneously into Princess Ira's bottom to combat cellulite turned out to be "excruciatingly (sic) painful and a complete waste of time". The film actress Marthe Keller finds it worthwhile however to have her hair washed in eggs, watercress and bone-marrow, while Lilli Palmer concentrates on her teeth, since they are "the soul of the face".

Lady Diana Cooper keeps her make-up on twenty-four hours a day. Sir Phillips "would rather die" than go to bed before cleaning her face. Some take exercise, some take lovers, some take vitamin pills. Some spend money and others time. Marie Helvin spends the whole morning closeted in her bathroom on her elaborate health and beauty routine. "Then it's lunchtime". She is very keen on the importance of "a good sex life", and makes some startling and cheerful revelations about the virility of her husband David.

A revised, enlarged and up-dated edition of the *Dictionary of Medical Ethics*, edited by A. S. Duncan, G. R. Dunstan and R. S. Wainman. Originally published in 1971, has recently appeared (Durrant, London and Todd, 459pp., £12.50, 0 232 51492 5). 148 contributors have written on the ethical implications of topics in medicine ranging from "Abortion" to a "Warning on Self-Medication" and the World Medical Association covering on the way. Cloning, "Mutilation" and Torture among others less alarming, and dealing with a number of issues and methods with which most people are now familiar, from stem-cell transplantation, artificial insemination, cosmetic surgery,

Bailey. The most total artefact of them all is Diana Vreeland of *Vogue*; but then, as she remarks, "I'm just not fascinated by natural people".

Grace Bumbry, for all her "dedication to her looks", is disconcertingly natural. "Her only skin has a tendency towards acne" - and she makes further intimate confidences to Princess Ira of an even more unglamorous nature. But the only people who would not play up to the Princess at all were two ex-models, Jean Shrimpton and Baroness Fiona Thyssen, and the French editor and politician Françoise Giroud, who describes herself as "a sort of jeep" and insisted on talking about the importance of financial independence for women. The Princess was stumped by Jean Shrimpton, now running a hotel in Penzance and "probably less involved with her physical self than any woman I've ever met", and impressed by Fiona Thyssen as "a woman at peace with herself". (These three all have streaky hair, quite a lot of wrinkles, no make-up to speak of, and are beautiful, as they always were.)

There is nothing immoral or shameful in making your self into a work of art. It is the desire to match reality to self-image that drives narcissists to cosmetic surgeons and other professionals. As Lady Antonia Fraser so aptly puts it, "As Descartes so aptly puts it, I think blonde therefore I am". Some of the dedicated women in this book must have undergone cosmetic surgery but they are keeping quiet about it, although they are happy to discuss the relative merits of face-lifts and silicone injections. Lady Antonia gravely says, "I respect women who make that decision". But if she herself were to resort to surgery she would tell no one. "It would seem like such a waste of money".

It takes not only a lot of money but a sort of idiot courage. No one who saw the recent BBC television documentary, *Facelift*, will ever forget the moment when the cosmetic surgeon peeled back the skin from the face of his anaesthetized patient to reveal the raw blood, bone and tissue beneath: a rabbit's skull in a butcher's shop, one would have said. Then he replaced the skin tidily, stretching it as required, like rolled-out pastry over a meat pie. Nor was it reassuring to see a surgeon vigorously stuffing a bulging polythene bag of liquid silicone into a slit in a woman's breast. But thousands every year submit themselves to these horrors. It is a matter, as a Scottish doctor on the programme said, of "dealing with an obsession by surgery". One clinic gets up to a hundred enquiries a day. Rhinoplasty (a nose job) or mammoplasty will cost over £1,000. There is a great deal of money to be made.

One man who became "a millionaire in any currency" through cosmetic surgery was Karl Heinrich Willi, who died in 1972 at the age of eighty-eight. He was a Swiss who practised in London, and his life has been written by L. J. Ludovici - or half-written, since Willi is wrapped in mystery. Mr Ludovici is frequently reduced to paragraphs of hectic rhetorical questions. But the half-story is sufficiently extraordinary. Willi had no medical qualifications at all (in 1921 he was prosecuted for falsely using the title of doctor) but achieved such eminence that plastic surgeons of the calibre of Sir Harold Gillies and Sir Archibald McIndoe came to watch him. He pioneered the technique of operating from the nose from inside: he was also the first to use a "radioactive" ink to trace antique methods too when it suited him - such as applying leeches to disperse haematoma. In the days be-

fore silicone, he used the patient's own fat, taken from the stomach, to inject into pouches under the facial skin and fill them out.

How he acquired his skills is unknown, though in his early days he practised on pigs' heads bought from Smithfield. He came to England just before the First World War, and started practising - in both senses - in a flat over Bumpus's bookshop in Oxford Street. Between the wars he was probably the only man in the country devoting himself entirely to cosmetic surgery, and by 1930 was rich enough to buy himself a large house in Eton Avenue, Hampstead, where he became very grand and even more expensive. He wrote books, at least one of which, *The Face* (1955), did very well.

Willi had a personality that inspired confidence: he saw himself as Pygmalion. (A certain Lady Thompson had ten facelifts by him, which must have cost her a fortune.) Perhaps he made a lot of people happy. But in private life his personality was less genial. As a very young man he had married a girl called Marie Muff, an assistant in a Lucerne department store, and in his Eton Avenue heyday Marie Muff got a very raw deal indeed. Willi's mistress lived in a flat in the grounds, and he told a friend: "My wife is far from ideal, you understand; she is in all respects a little woman, whereas I'm a man of vast horizons". When they went back to Switzerland together for a family funeral the man of vast horizons stayed at the Palace Hotel, and Marie Muff had a room in a temperance boarding-house.

Willi retired in 1960, and absolutely nothing has happened since then in the field of cosmetic surgery. Mr Ludovici says, to out-date his work other than a few "expected advances in surgical techniques". Cosmetic surgery has in many respects grown much more respectable; yet the fortunes to be made out of "dealing with an obsession by surgery" mean that there are plenty of quacks, cowboys and incompetents around, especially since institutes of cosmetic surgery have begun to advertise in popular magazines. As Mr Ludovici writes, "Cosmetic plastic surgery since Willi's day is being aired more, publicized widely. But this does not mean that its advertisers all possess the skills or the perfectionist outlook of a Willi *avant l'empire*". Beware the men of vast horizons - the men of lost horizons, peddling Shangri-la.

## The declining years

By Phyllis Willmott

MARY STOIT:

*Aging for Beginners*  
214pp. Oxford: Blackwell, £7.95  
(paperback, £2.25).  
0 631 11591 9

Growing old is a commonplace experience, part of the normal process of living. But these days it is like a number of other experiences; it is likely to be turned into a "problem", taken over by experts. *Aging for Beginners* is the first in a series (Understanding Every-day Experience) which aims to reclaim such experiences from the world of the expert and demonstrate that they may be less of a problem and more manageable than they have come to be seen as being.

From the enviable position of having "no conscious fear" of the decrepitude that age can bring, Mary Stoit, former feature writer on the *Guardian* and now vigorous septuagenarian, sets out to convince us that those in late middle age and those near to retirement could be frightening themselves unnecessarily.

Her approach is unusual; she has made the book both a personal testament of the potential of old age and a compendium of practical advice and old. Throughout she draws on her own experiences, both past and present.



The lady reading Bilge by "Dotti" is one of a series of ninety-nine pen and ink drawings by Nicholas Bentley, illustrating J. D. Morton's "1933 and Still Going Wrong", to be included in a sale of English Illustrated and Private Press Books and Related Drawings at Sotheby's, New Bond Street, London W1 on Friday July 31.

it in retirement. Similarly, in support of the pleasures to be gained from travel in later life, she recounts some of her adventures, including a recent trip to China where she spent her seventy-first birthday.

Preparing this book clearly took the indefatigable explorer and her "itchy feet" on journeying of a different kind nearer home. She visited sheltered housing and residential homes, she talked with directors of organizations for the elderly and trade union leaders, and she researched into the history of residential care and fixed retirement ages. All this and more she weaves into the book, along with her own reflections and comments. At times it is almost as if one is not so much reading as listening in the way that one does with an old friend.

This familiar and easy style enables the author to make digestible (and, helped by an index, retrievable), an impressive amount of advice and information that in less skilled hands could seem dreary. An early chapter gives sensible advice about moving to the retirement years and the pitfalls to be avoided. Another chapter looks at how to make the best of family ties, as well as how to manage if you have none. Other more tricky subjects discussed are the need for sex and the right to end life. On both, the author's views are controversial, but on the second (euthanasia) recent events suggest that the matter is more difficult to get right than she believes.

Another contentious issue given a relatively long airing is that of the right to work beyond normal retirement age. Mary Stoit makes a spirited defence of the need for a flexible retirement age somewhere between sixty and seventy. A flexible retirement age is surely right to take the positive line that she does, which no doubt springs from her own enjoyment of living. Growing old is an experience to which there is, for most of us, no acceptable alternative. Fortunately, more of us than in the past are likely to reach old age fit enough, and "young" enough to make the most of it. With Mary Stoit's help, we will be rather better equipped to do so.

The shortage of money inevitably meant that the Hawthorne children could not get the excellent education their father had hoped to provide for them in England, and had to be taught at home by their parents and a series of unsatisfactory nannies and governesses. Nor were the family able to travel extensively, as they had planned, although they did manage a long stay in Italy after the completion of the four years in Liverpool.

Like many other New Englanders, Hawthorne had always thought of England as "the old home", a belief so strong that on arrival he felt he had been there before: "the illusion was often so powerful, that almost immediately he was a sort of innate idea, the print of a recollection in some ancestral mind, transmitted with fainter and fainter impress through several descents, to my own". By the time he had been in the country two years, his disappointments had so embittered him that he began foisting his disillusionment on to his alien surroundings: "I HATE England; though I love some Englishmen, and like them generally, in fact." The tepidity of his affections was indicated by those last two words, "in fact", and a franker statement was his remark that "An American is not very apt to love the English people, as a whole, on whatever length of acquaintance".

Not that the fault was all his. As many travellers in both Hawthorne's century and our own have discovered, the English could be unbearably condescending about American institutions and behaviour, their information chiefly derived from Mrs Trollope or Dickens, two writers whom they would never have looked to for documentation about the domestic manners of the

RAYMONA E. HULL:

Nathaniel Hawthorne  
The English Experience, 1853-1864  
307pp. University of Pittsburgh Press.  
\$21.95.  
0 8229 3418 3

On July 6, 1853, Nathaniel Hawthorne set sail with his family for Liverpool aboard the Cunard liner Niagara and for seven years did not return to the United States. Most of his best work was already written, and at forty-nine he was a mild international celebrity; but it was not primarily literature that drew him to England. Instead, he was about to begin a four-year consularship, his reward for writing a huck campaign biography of his old friend Franklin Pierce, who on his inauguration to the Presidency appointed Hawthorne to what was generally considered the most suitable foreign post with a high income.

Hawthorne's family expenses had been mounting, and he knew he would soon need to provide a costly education for three children. Most of the income from the Liverpool consularship came from fees for signing invoices on vessels departing for the United States, and he believed that he could make ten times the \$1,000 a year on which he had been living. With only moderate effort he ought to make himself financially independent for life; in what he confidently expected to be a good bit of spare time, he would write a romance with an English setting.

As it turned out, the consularship was excessively hard work and boring beyond Hawthorne's worst expectations. He hated the claims on his help made by "brutal ship masters, drunken sailors, vagrant Yankees, mad people, sick people, and dead people". The formal entertainments were scarcely less irritating: he shirked giving them himself and disliked attending those at which he was an honoured guest. By the end of his first year he was kept from resigning only by his hope of saving at least \$30,000 in four years. Halfway through his stay the fee system was replaced by the payment of flat salaries to consuls, in Hawthorne's case, \$7,500. Gradually he came to the realization that with heavy expenses he would be lucky to be much better off financially than he had been from his writing.

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English. And their customary acceptance of Hawthorne as an unusual exception to the crudeness of his countrymen was, if anything, even more infuriating. He got along well with men like Richard Monckton Milnes or Lord Stanley, but he knew that he was better educated, better mannered, better bred than most of the English with whom he was thrown in the course of his duties, which made their patronizing doubly unwelcome. Yet, when he dealt with the Americans who had business at the Consulate, they seemed everything that the English had always assumed they were. Even his beloved wife Sophia was sometimes vulgar in her admiration of the luxury of the houses they visited and the splendour of the English women's dresses. Once he was actually on the Continent, both England and America seemed Paradise. "I doubt whether English civility, for the very reason that it is so gross, is not better for man's moral and spiritual nature, than that you are gratifying your coarsest animal needs and propensities, and are duly ashamed of it."

Like any good tourist, Hawthorne loved a picturesque village, a gloomy cathedral, or best of all a ruin, but he seems in large part to have been curiously unperceptive visually. In a conscientious attempt to remedy this defect he moved to Manchester in 1857 for seven weeks to study the contents of the Great Exhibition as preparation for life in Italy. He hated the destructive effects of Puritanism, while he retained many of its prejudices, in particular that towards nudity in art. "The most disagreeable of English painters is Etty, who had a diseased appetite for woman's flesh, and spent his whole life, apparently, in painting them with enormously developed bosoms and buttocks. I do not mind nudity, in a modest and natural way, but Etty's women really thrust their nakedness upon you so with malice aforethought, and especially to enhance their posterior, that one feels inclined to kick them." Sculpture had better perish, he thought, than depend upon the undraped body.

Unhappy and uncomfortable as he was in England, his situation might have been marvellously fruitful had he been a writer of social comedy. It is fascinating to think what James would have made of being similarly thrust among so many self-satisfied vulgarities. Instead, Hawthorne quietly stopped writing romance and turned to keeping notes of his impressions, intending to mine them for later books but never printing the notes themselves. Randall Stewart, who published the first complete edition of *The English Notebooks* some forty years ago, quite properly called the entire 300,000 words "perhaps the fullest and richest record ever written by an American about England, which is surely making up for his trade for another *Bleakdale Romance*".

Occasionally in the *Notebooks* Hawthorne seems merely to be marking time, copying down standard reactions, as if in preparation for a tourist's guidebook, but usually his observations are shrewd, often fairly amusing. Accustomed to the well-fed wives of Northern manufacturers, he noted with an Etty-like eye that English women were "massive, not seemingly with pure fat, but with solid beef, making an awful ponderosity of frame. You think of them as composed of sirloins, and with broad and thick steaks on Martin Tupper and his wife, he noticed wryly that they ate "their ice-creams in a most loving and conjugal fashion, putting their spoons, at pleasure, each into the other's glass." Nor did he spare himself or his countrymen: "There certainly is something in royalty, and the institutions connected therewith, that turns the Republican brain."

In spite of their hundreds of brilliant pages, the *Notebooks* have been of less use to biographers than might be hoped. For one thing, Hawthorne wrote seamlessly, in what film-makers call long takes, with the idea that his impressions of a single scene or locality might later be written up as an essay with little change; the result is that they

are not easily quotable. More fundamentally, they are difficult to use in biography because Hawthorne revealed so little of himself. A great deal of his personality can be inferred from his attitudes towards others, but he was personally reticent. The frontispiece of *Nathaniel Hawthorne, The English Experience* shows a handsome and intelligent face with faintly amused eyes that regard the world without giving much away. What lay behind that urbanely quizzical glance remains a deliberate mystery.

We may have to wait a long time for a biography that satisfactorily blends his daily life, the landscape of his psyche, and the works he wrote. For all its stately, superbly informed thoroughness about the events of Hawthorne's life, Arlin Turner's recent biography leaves the reader uncertain whether there was an actual, imaginative man behind all that detail, let alone one capable of the chiaroscuro of *The Scarlet Letter*. As Larzer Ziff has written in these interpretations, Turner was not concerned "with interpreting psychologically the facts on the record", nor was he much interested in "the connection of the life to the letters". Frederick Crews's brilliant study of the works (admittedly not a biography in the usual sense) interprets the books in the light of Hawthorne's psyche, naming it not always illuminating his neuroses, but the life of which he writes was the interior one, and in spite of his admonitions to biographers, at the end of his exciting essay we still feel that there was perhaps more connection than he suggests between Hawthorne's exterior life and his writings.

Confronted with these two extremes, Raymona E. Hull chooses that of Turner. She is even less concerned than he with Hawthorne's writing, focusing on the documentation of his wanderings in England and Italy, so that the reader initially feels apprehensively that she may be doing nothing but annotating the *Notebooks*. It is surely true, as she claims, that Hawthorne's life in England has been

neglected: Turner, for example, has nearly a hundred pages on the period included in this book. But besides the diaries and journals, Mrs Hawthorne's letters, and various other scattered material, Professor Hull has been able to use the results of her own delightfully single-minded tracking-down of the many places in which the Hawthornes lived for seven years. What interests her is physical detail rather than conjecture or even ordering of events. The result is not intellectual history, but in spite of its clearly uninviting subtitle, the book is a vivid account of what it must have been like to live as a nominal nineteenth-century Englishman and Italy.

It is hard to think of another single book where it is possible to find out more about nineteenth-century rents, ferry costs, the mean economies of boarding-house keepers, what was provided in lodging-houses, the necessities of servants, the pictures on the walls of rented rooms, menus, even the names of the intermediate stations at which one changed on railway journeys. Generally, it must have been a miserable and fatiguing life, and it inevitably makes the reader wonder why so many thousands of people seem to have chosen to live that way.

A handsome furnished house outside Liverpool usually cost £200 annually, although the rent was reduced for Hawthorne to £160 once the landlady discovered that he was a person of some consequence. Even so it seemed expensive, and eventually the Hawthornes moved to a lodging-house where bedrooms were lit by gas and each bed and a sitting room with shabby furniture cost £2 6d weekly. Since guests had to provide their own food and necessities "even to the candles you burn, and the soap on your washstands", Hawthorne called the English lodging-house "a contrivance for carrying the domestic cares of home about with you". There were, however, what seem today like compensations: a turtle and venison dinner for ten, with sherry, punch, hock, claret,

ale, champagne, moselle, port, liqueurs, madeira, brandy, and cigars, cost only £22 10s at a good hotel, including bed and breakfast for the understandingly exhausted guests. In Florence the Hawthornes took apartments on the *piano nobile* of a house, including terrace, garden, seventeen rooms, and luxurious furnishings, for which they paid £10 a month.

This is, in the best sense, a very modestly written book, with no hint of the writer's personality save her uncontrollable enthusiasm for Hawthorne and her delight in following his tracks. At its conclusion the reader perhaps understands little more about what was ticking over behind that enigmatic mask, but we can appreciate something of the discomforts that must have been part of the reason he adopted it.

Between 1826 and 1833 James Fenimore Cooper lived in Europe, much of the time in Paris. On his return to the United States he incorporated his observations of Europe in a series of *Gleanings in Europe*, two volumes of which, *Italy and Switzerland*, have recently been reissued, after being long out of print, by the State University of New York Press, Albany (July, 377pp, *Switzerland*, 361pp). Both volumes form part of the definitive edition of Cooper's works that has been appearing since the mid-1960s under the general editorship of James Franklin Beard, and are published with a full textual commentary. These two historical house where bedrooms were lit by gas and each bed and a sitting room with shabby furniture cost £2 6d weekly. Since guests had to provide their own food and necessities "even to the candles you burn, and the soap on your washstands", Hawthorne called the English lodging-house "a contrivance for carrying the domestic cares of home about with you". There were, however, what seem today like compensations: a turtle and venison dinner for ten, with sherry, punch, hock, claret,

## Battles and between

By Geoffrey Carnall

A. D. HARVEY:  
*English Literature and the Great War with France*  
An Anthology and Commentary  
162pp. Nold Jonson Books. £9.  
0 907538 02 9

This is a spirited anthology, a succession of energetic narratives of battles and events between battles, together with some material drawn from the "home front" in the Napoleonic Wars. The texts will be unfamiliar to most readers, and they are well presented and introduced. The title is slightly misleading, for although most of the passages are of some literary merit, they nearly all belong to the genre of personal reminiscence, and there is hardly a glimpse of the wider literary landscape. Still, as A. D. Harvey remarks, the wars of 1792-1815 had little direct impact on professional writers, both because all but the poorer classes were exempted from active military service, and because there was nothing like the degree of economic mobilization that occurred in the world wars of the present century. The war could be kept at a distance. A non-participating audience could view the conflict "through an insulating barrier of romanticizing and gothic fantasy".

Mr Harvey cites John Foster's astonishment at the indifference displayed by his contemporaries towards wartime events (an indifference extremely unfavourable to the pretensions of epic poets like Joseph Conte), and might usefully have added further of Foster's abiding preoccupation with "that protective obtuseness which we acquire in defence of our own ease." Jane Austen

was probably more representative than most people of her time might have cared to admit: "How horrible it is," she remarked after the Battle of Albuera in 1811, "to have so many people killed! - and what a blessing that one cares for none of them!"

This volume certainly pierces the insulating barrier of romantic poetry and official art. Charles James Napier's account of his part in the Battle of Corunna, and Cavalier Mercer's narrative of Waterloo display the confusion and the carnage with a Tolstoyan fidelity. Napier's short-sightedness heightens one's sense of the impossibility of getting any perception of a battle as a whole, but the succession of moments of intense danger and distress none the less suggests movements and manoeuvres in confusing interaction. What is most impressive is the sense of Napier's coming to terms with almost unbearable memories, "as when he had to abandon one of his own wounded men. 'I felt it horrible to leave him', he says in words that form a curious parallel to Jane Austen's, "but selfishness and pain got the better." Mercer, with normal eyesight, was little the better for it, though he had a sharper view of the tangled men and horses (some with entrails hanging out). These two narratives were not published till long after they were written: Napier's in 1857 and Mercer's in 1870, when a naturalism of this kind was well established. They form an odd contrast with the stilted extracts from stories by William Hamilton Maxwell, published in the 1830s, included in this anthology to illustrate the genesis of the war novel.

One of the few extracts to come from a work published shortly after the wars (in 1818) is an anonymous narrative by a Scottish soldier who served in the campaign that ended at

Corunna. It is a fine evocation of bleak physical hardship, of a mind pushed to the limit of endurance, a story that could have figured in *Lyrical Ballads*.

Harvey is anxious to suggest parallels between the Napoleonic Wars and the world wars of the present century, using titles like "Less We Forget" into "Battle" "Colditz 1808-style", and "Total War". The contrasts are often more striking than the similarities, particularly where the scale of warfare is concerned, though George Jackson's eye-witness description of the bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807 makes clear that this is an authentic forerunner of the air bombardment of civilians. Jackson's horror, says Harvey, "was shared by the rest of the civilized world". This is not altogether true: Coleridge's defence of the affair in *The Friend* is very civilized indeed, although its characteristic obliquity perhaps hints at an unacknowledged uneasiness. At the time, Southey condemned the bombing as "an everlasting and ineffaceable infamy", but later, during the war with America, thought that Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, and other east-coast cities should be given the Copenhagen treatment: a nice example of the brutalization of the civilian mind in time of war.

The civilian mind, indeed, is not adequately represented in these pages. Sir Philip Francis appears sourly appraising his contemporaries in a way that shows his obnoxiousness to the wars, Samuel Bamford evades the pressing Wordsworth and Southey celebrate Waterloo on the top of Skiddaw. But some material might well have been found to illustrate the hopes and anxieties generated by the conflict, constantly threatening to erode the insulating barriers and the protective obtuseness. In this respect the anthology is a little disappointing.



# Home comforts

By Anne Duchêne

CATHERINE COOKSON:  
The Mary Ann Omnibus  
798pp. Macdonald. £6.95.  
0 354 04604 7

"Everything in this story is fictitious, except that which you yourself know to be true". Catherine Cookson wrote in 1954, at the outset of her career, as prefix to *A Grand Man*, which was the first of the eight "Mary Ann" novels now reprinted in one volume. The italics are not hers, but it seems stressing the brave device she nailed to her mast so early, and under which she still triumphantly sails.

These days there are never fewer than fifty Cookson titles in print in English at any time; they are translated into fifteen languages; and new books are still steadily produced, for which besottedly loyal readers wrestle discreetly in high-minded public libraries where fiction cannot be reserved – or "only serious fiction", as one of our librarians explained when we queried the presence of *Scoop* and *Black Mischief* on the Reserve shelf. (You can, just now, buy the latest Cookson paperback in Woolworth's; and many are to be found on second-hand shelves, unless with-in about fifteen minutes of arriving there.)

Catherine Cookson, certainly, is not "serious" fiction; not because she is associated with naughty words like "best-seller" and "profit", but because, quite simply, she is not a good enough writer. It is, on the other hand, inaccurate to call her, as those who do not know her often tend to do, a "romantic novelist". "Romantic novelists" deal in matters which their readers know not to be true. Miss Cookson scorns such delusiveness. She writes stories in which her readers can gratefully recognise experience and emotions of their own – heightened to be sure, by greater comedy or greater violence than their own lives normally vouchsafe, but based on all their own affections, furies, aspirations and reactions.

The antithesis of "romantic" is presumably "domestic", here, Miss Cookson, like Burns, assumes that "to make a happy fireside clime" is "the true pathos and sublime" of the human life, and that achieving it is very often very rough going. She has a number of abrasive tendencies which keep her well outside the "romantic" pale: as much concern, for instance, with the pains encountered by marriage as with the innocent turbulence before; a liking for children, whose unreasonable demands seldom disturb romantic fiction; an acknowledgement of old people, and a willingness even to depict them, if need be, as ungenerously nasty, mean-minded and malign (like Mary Ann's maternal grandmother).

Again, when Mary Ann's husband, in the last story here, nearly succumbs to a blondo and long-legged siren, the temptress is called Diana Blenkinsop. Plainly Miss Cookson knew this was a risible name for a *femme fatale*; presumably she chose it partly to keep a trite situation within some reach of comedy, as she herself has done, and also to suggest that Blenkinsop can be just as dangerous as any others.

Close scrutiny of this kind induces, indeed, grave doubts about Mary Ann's husband. His name is Corry, rather than Corneilus, as he has hidden depths, of course, but the name still suggests some reserve on the author's part. Marriage in the last above the garage he owns is, like other marriages, certainly domestic rather than romantic in character, and at the very end Mary Ann is achieving a degree of independence by visiting regular places for the local paper, based on the *Welshman's* of the family dog.

Mary Ann's own name was Shakespeare, which makes her much harder to pin down than a Boyle or a Blenkinsop, but her father is only tenuously Irish – a founding, given

the name of the workhouse porter – and all the books are set, like most of Miss Cookson's, in Tyneside. Much is always made of Miss Cookson as a regional author, but the Tyneside veneer here is in fact thin: there are two paragraphs describing sunset on the shipyard, and for the rest of the time people say "Eeh!" and "By!" as interjections, and Mary Ann has to be taught not to say "me da" and "me ma"; children are invariably "brayed" when given a good hiding, but only bus-drivers say, "divin't hang about"; and Corry in his brief unrequited phrase says "Aa'm gonna lara it proper". It is a relief when, like Mary Ann, he adopts what the author calls "Northern English", which reads like Standard Received but has to be imagined with attractive local colouration.

Elocution figures prominently throughout the books. Once Mary Ann begins to go to "posh" convent schools, with "the better-class children of Newcastle and Durham and thereabouts", they "talk ever so nice, and when she was with them she talked ever so nice too", though not quite like the other girls' parents, whose voices are "high up in the head, sort of swanky". Only Mary Ann's magnificent "da", the "Grand Man" of the opening title, manages more mysteriously in "posh" encounters: "He never talked like this to her ma, nor had she heard him talk like this to anybody else. Not that he was putting on, but he was talking nice and... passing himself." The dots are the author's, and – like dashes – often beset her; this same paragraph concludes: "It was a revelation to her, a joyful revelation. Oh, she was so proud... her da could pass himself."

It will have become apparent by now that most of the book is recounted through Mary Ann's own account of thought. This has the double advantage of making a strong demotic appeal to readers, and of muzzling the author's own rather majestic indifference to punctuation and language: such phrases as "it was her he was yelling at" are natural in Mary Ann, but confusions of "sensitivity" with "sensitivity", "repulsed" with "repelled" often make a cracked sound when the narrative shifts focus to describe some particularly strong emotion in another character. (The printing – from America, and photostated here – is execrable, so she cannot always blame the author for the many collisions of pronouns, and even the frequent transposing of lines.)

The Mary Ann saga of eight books, written over thirteen years, lends itself readily to unkind summary. The first came nearest to fairy tale: Miss Cookson wrote a good many other books over the same period, and learned to lengthen her stride. In this book, Mary Ann is a child in a Jarrow slum, and her "da" is often drunk (or, as Mary Ann invariably, and rather irritatingly, calls it, "fick"), because he loathes the shipyard and longs to work on the land. Mary Ann's life is very full, and very full of emotions. Apart from school and slum rivals to fight, she also has to monitor her parents' relationship and intervene whenever it goes awry. (She likes to see them "kind" together, and "larking" on the kitchen sofa, and eavesdrops steadily to ensure this end; it is to be noted that though she always hears them if they quarrel, she never hears them making love.) She also has long confidant chats at the locher Owen, church with dear old Father Owen, and more passionate and unstable ones with the life-size figures of the Holy Family ("It was a funny thing about them, she thought. Sometimes they were all over you and other times they didn't let on you were there").

Finally, Mary Ann does a Shirley Temple on the local John Barrymore figure, Mr. Lord, a shipowner, who is extremely rich, lonely, grumpy, embittered and so on. Touched to the core by this child who "could lie purpose of a priest" (also, as his aged retainer puts it, "with the temper of a banshee and the cunning ways of the wee folk"), Mr. Lord gives her "da", a job on the farm, and a cottage with it.

None of the other books ends with quite such traditional radiance. In the middle reaches of the saga, indeed, Miss Cookson herself seems to nod, and Mary Ann is set a bit wildly to effecting reconciliations between the estranged parents of her school-friends, and so on. She is first sent to a "posh" convent school in the South by Mr. Lord, anxious to expose her to more polite influences than Jarrow's, but runs away after rumours that a young woman is making a set at her "da", and a letter from her mother which ends with what Mary Ann at once recognizes as a dried tear-drop. Weeping takes place on a Victorian scale throughout the books; men only weep in anguish, but the large female cast is allowed to weep when happy as well as sad. Laughter is equally prodigal, though Mr. Lord "always had to sit down when he laughed, for the unusual emotion seemed to shake his entire frame", and other people double up and have to grope for chairs too – a rarer sight, really, when you come to think of it, than tears; but Miss Cookson likes to communicate all emotions generously.

## Troublesome scruples

By Patricia Craig

MARGARET FORSTER:  
Marital Rites  
183pp. Secker and Warburg. £6.95.  
0 436 16112 5

After the thriller, the tranquilizer. Margaret Forster's last novel, *The Bride of Lowther Fell*, was a credible exercise in the neo-Gothic mode, agreeably convoluted and suitably interperate at the moment of climax. *Marital Rites* returns us squarely to London N6, where a lady named Anna Osgood has made a terrible discovery. She has found out that her husband Robert is capable of infidelity. He has told her so himself, in a letter which filled poor Anna with alarm and dismay. What letter had not been posted! Soon Anna, in her best green dress, is driving towards Wandsworth and Robert's office, pausing only to wave cheerfully to her neighbour Lucy, who is heading for Sainsbury's.

A plan has come into Anna's head. She will waylay her husband's secretary, Betty, and persuade her to tell Robert that a mishap occurred to yesterday's mail. It never got posted. If this is the case, the Osgood alliance can return to its pristine felicity, and no harm done. (Anna is not thinking clearly.) This marriage, which approaches perfection in everyone's eyes, is surely worth a little dissembling on the part of Anna.

Ah, but it was the worry of deceit that led Robert to put his marriage in jeopardy in the first place. Or was his action prompted by some deep need to test the strength of the marital tie? It is difficult to tell. Margaret Forster makes no attempt to devise consistent psychological motivations for her characters. Robert and Anna, indeed, are considered only in the light of what they do to other people's heads of onions.

"She admired him only for what he is: a happily married man. If he was no longer a happily married man then his identity was gone and her admiration with it."

This is Betty's view of her employer. Betty is a Scottish orphan, plain, sturdy and sentimental. Her heart is in thrall to the idea of Robert and Anna as a happy couple. In the moment of shock when she learns of Robert's possible treachery (Anna is not explicit) she agrees to do as Anna asks. Then she changes her mind and tells Robert what she has done. At this point in the novel, Robert knows that Anna knows, but Anna doesn't know that Robert knows she knows. The plot is now beginning to resemble a quasi-mathematical problem. If A is better than B and C, and C is cleverer than A and B, who is the most deserving of all?

All such summaries are, indeed, unfair. What Catherine Cookson's books transmit is the impression of an essential honesty and generosity of feeling, which leaves her splendidly outside the safe little pale of her "romantic contemporaries". However much she sometimes fudges her prose, or for practical purposes pulls her punches, or scatters homely comfort about like vision seems clear, and by no means always comfortable, but always generous. She has what Dr Johnson called a sound bottom of sense. "If Mary Ann lives to be eighty and she marries into the top drawer, she will remain a child of the Tyne... a man or woman are their first ten years", the "da" says at one solemn moment (and Mary Ann in the end, of course, chooses Corry, from the slums). More potent even than this ugliness is the warmth of family affection and loyalty she postulates.

She has also been more enterprising in her themes than the Mary Ann corner-stone suggests, and in 1968, for instance, produced a book about a half-caste girl – stunningly

beautiful, to compensate for her other difficulties, but these are not entirely evaded: "Life must be paid for", her black father says, and she might pay "perhaps with babies who would be black outside as well as in." "In this story I make no effort to solve a problem", the author's foreword said. "The solution, if there is one, for the living conflicts, the half-castes, would seem to lie in the far, far future." Not a "fearless confronting" of the problem, then; but a generous thesis in this context and at that time.

Hence, then, the fifty books in print, and the fifteen languages into which they are translated. It was probably John Julius Norwich, in a radio conversation with other travellers, who once said it was often overlooked that 86 per cent of the world's people were kind and well-intentioned. Even if one divides them by half – and there seems no need to debate the matter of why one assumes Miss Cookson's readers are female – it still makes something too large to be a sub-culture; and something of which she has most honourably tapped the mainsprings.

This is by far the longest of his published correspondences, extending over nearly forty years and comprising more than four hundred letters, many of them long "lettres-bavardages" in which views and opinions are exchanged with a freedom and lack of inhibition uncharacteristic of the normally restrained Larbaud. Marcel Ray was the son of a local headmaster in Vichy who was introduced to the Larbaud household at the age of sixteen as a holiday-companion for the young heir to the Saint-Yorre mineral-water fortune, who was three years his junior. The differences in their upbringings led to a certain friction at first but they shared a common passion for literature and there soon developed a friendship which, although they never departed from the more formal "vous" in addressing each other, became a close and intimate one. Their correspondence will be read not just because it charts the relationship of two highly articulate and cultivated individuals but because it evokes the atmosphere of a whole epoch in French literary history. It was an epoch in which, for example, the name of Baudelaire rose from comparative neglect to the pantheon of French poetry – in 1934 Ray wrote to Larbaud recalling that forty years earlier "il ne fut guère d'usage de citer Baudelaire" – and in which a vast influx of foreign literature took place, with Larbaud as one of its prime movers.

The opening letters are marked by a note of reserve, caused by the difference in their ages and by Ray adopting a somewhat protective attitude towards his younger correspondent. Any barriers that still existed between them, however, were broken down in 1901 by a trip together to Germany, where Ray was about to spend a year. Even before that we find Larbaud confiding to Ray ("est Walt Whitman qui a mes amours") and wanting to introduce "un grand courant d'esprit étranger" into France. He pictured himself invading French literature at the head of a troop of English and American writers, soon to be followed by Australians and Canadians, among whom he had heard of some powerful dramatists. Moreover his interests were not confined to the English-speaking world. As early as 1902 he speaks of adding Portuguese to his range of languages because "j'entends dire partout que le Brésil a une littérature admirable". His lists of purchases for his library at La Thébaïde seem endless. Although Léon-Paul Fargue's eventual count of 50,000 volumes was a gross over-estimate, complete editions of Thoreau, Hawthorne, Carlyle, Byron, Chateaubriand (38 vols), Musset and Lamartine (68 vols) "c'est toute une bibliothèque", all figure within the first few years of this correspondence.

Ray for his part was a German specialist. After coming second in the *agrégation d'allemand* in 1904, he occupied a succession of teaching and research posts, including that of *supplément* at the University of Mont-

VALÉRY LARBAUD/MARCEL RAY:  
Correspondance 1899-1937  
Tome I, 1899-1909, 368pp.  
Tome II, 1910-1920, 337pp.  
Tome III, 1921-1937, 393pp.  
Edited by Françoise Liouret  
Paris: Gallimard.

Valéry Larbaud deserves to be better known in this country than he is – and not to be continually confused with his more illustrious contemporary Paul Valéry. Many of his works are set in England, including his delightful account of a walking-tour in Warwickshire in the summer of 1909, *Le Cœur de l'Angleterre*. He was for a number of years the leading "angliste", as he used to call himself, for both *La Phalange* and *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. He played a major part in translating and introducing to France, among others, the works of Walter Savage Landor, Coventry Patmore, Samuel Butler and James Joyce.

His is by far the longest of his published correspondences, extending over nearly forty years and comprising more than four hundred letters, many of them long "lettres-bavardages" in which views and opinions are exchanged with a freedom and lack of inhibition uncharacteristic of the normally restrained Larbaud. Marcel Ray was the son of a local headmaster in Vichy who was introduced to the Larbaud household at the age of sixteen as a holiday-companion for the young heir to the Saint-Yorre mineral-water fortune, who was three years his junior. The differences in their upbringings led to a certain friction at first but they shared a common passion for literature and there soon developed a friendship which, although they never departed from the more formal "vous" in addressing each other, became a close and intimate one. Their correspondence will be read not just because it charts the relationship of two highly articulate and cultivated individuals but because it evokes the atmosphere of a whole epoch in French literary history. It was an epoch in which, for example, the name of Baudelaire rose from comparative neglect to the pantheon of French poetry – in 1934 Ray wrote to Larbaud recalling that forty years earlier "il ne fut guère d'usage de citer Baudelaire" – and in which a vast influx of foreign literature took place, with Larbaud as one of its prime movers.

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# Cases of cosmopolitanism

By Peter Fawcett

pelier. He began a thesis on the German poetic revolution of the 1880s but, having waited in vain for a permanent university appointment, in 1912 embarked instead on a career in journalism. This led him eventually to the political editorship of *Le Petit Journal* – nicknamed variously in this correspondence *Le Petit Jubeau*, *Pauvre Jérémie* and *Le Petit Jubeux* – and to a series of governmental posts at home and abroad. He was De Gaulle's Inspector General of Cultural Affairs after the Liberation. His true profession, however, he told Larbaud in a letter in July 1913, was neither that of a journalist nor a pedagogue but "homme de lettres paresseux".

Both men had a number of material difficulties to contend with. In Ray's case these were almost purely financial, but in Larbaud's they were complicated by the interference of his redoubtable mother. Although Charles-Louis Philippe once said of Larbaud that it was a pleasure to meet someone beside whom Gide was made to look poor, he was never able to enjoy his inheritance to the full because his mother distrusted her son's spending habits and his literary associations. Twice he tried to wrest the capital from her grasp but had to be content with a judicial order allowing him a regular, sizeable income. As a result he became an habitué of the pawnshops of Europe, where he deposited jewels from time to time. Ray, by virtue of his position, was frequently pressed into service as a go-between in this family warfare and received the confidences of both sides.

The correspondence remains fairly sparse until 1907, which was the year in which Larbaud finally completed the *licence d'anglais* he had started six years earlier. By this time he had acquired a measure of self-confidence and was capable of returning advice to his older colleague as well as receiving it. When Ray, frustrated in his efforts to join the academic hierarchy, thought of applying for a scholarship to go round the world, Larbaud informed him: "En voyageant continuellement, vous n'aurez le temps de rien faire, vous perdrez l'habitude de travailler régulièrement", and went on to cite his own case: "j'ai eu de la peine à m'y remettre, vous pouvez vous en douter – mais maintenant c'est connu et je m'y tiendrai". His own cosmopolitan way of life he blamed largely on his mother, whose presence made Vichy ("cet enfer de fange froide et d'eau pourrissante") uninhabitable to him.

Ray's role in the conception and elaboration of Larbaud's most famous creation, the American millionaire Barnabooth, "citoyen de Wagons-Lits", is apparent from these letters. He it was who encouraged Larbaud to submit the original volume of *Poèmes par un riche amateur* (1908) to the printer and did not desert until the definitive edition of Barnabooth's *Oeuvres complètes* was published in 1913. He was constantly afraid that what he called Larbaud's "modestie littéraire" would lead him to underestimate the originality of his character, whom he defined variously as "l'Homme Moderne", a mythical hero on the scale of a Gulliver or a Don Quixote, and "le héros éponyme du dernier siècle de notre culture, le Julien l'Apostrophe du capitalisme mourant". Ray hoped that Larbaud would go on to create other Barnabooths and was clearly disappointed when his talents directed themselves instead to the charming portraits from childhood known as *Enfances*, one of which developed into the short novel *Fernina Marquet*.

If Larbaud had followed his own inclinations after completing his *licence*, his attention would have been turned more in the direction of French and Mediterranean culture. He told Ray in a letter in August 1907 that he wished to devote himself "uniquement à la culture de la langue française", feeling England to be "une nation encore très-barbare, où le

savoir est très peu répandu, où la vie intellectuelle est nulle, où tout est en retard", its only advantage being that "les Anglais sont les premiers au monde pour l'élégance masculine". He settled instead on Walter Savage Landor in order to please his mother, who wanted him to obtain a doctorate as quickly as possible in the hope that it would improve his marital prospects. There followed a period of prolonged visits to England and Italy, where Landor had lived in exile, though it was not until 1912 that Larbaud was able to spend more than two months abroad at any one time without returning home to see his mother. To Ray, who envied his "libre existence", he explained that Paris and Bourbonnais had become for him the home of all his bad



Valéry Larbaud in 1934.

memories and that, though he desired nothing more than to settle down and lead a peaceful bourgeois existence, each time a suitable partner of his own choosing presented herself, his mother's implacable opposition to the match forced him to beat a retreat and end up in the arms of a former mistress or in pursuit of a fresh adventure.

Among Larbaud's acquaintances in England were Wilfrid and Alice Meynell and their group of Anglo-Catholic friends, who must have influenced his own conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1910. But, unlike certain other notable French converts of the time, Larbaud refused to place his pen at the service of his faith. In 1912 he wrote to Ray describing "toutes les questions de l'utilité de l'art, de littérature néo-chrétienne, etc." as "des bateaux de bois" and "des bateaux de bois de considération". In 1911 he also came to know Arnold Bennett, referred to in these letters as "un homme charmant, en dépit de son socialisme et autres hérésies" and to whom Larbaud was later grateful for having obtained him a regular column in *The New Weekly* at £2 a week at a time when he could do with the money.

Ray had been a fellow-pupil of Charles-Louis Philippe's at the *lycée* in Moulins and had remained in touch with the author of *Bubu de Montparnasse* ever since. He was a member of the Groupe de Carnetia, as the circle of Philippe's friends came to be known. He introduced Larbaud to Philippe in November 1906. At first the two natives of Bourbonnais, with their widely differing social backgrounds, did not hit it off, but the following July Larbaud wrote to Ray to say that he had revised his opinion of Philippe and now found him superior to them

both in the matter of sentiment. When Philippe died in December 1909, Larbaud, who had never been a member of the Groupe de Carnetia, found himself taking on responsibility for the "family", as he called them, of Philippe's friends. Marguerite Audoux, the former seamstress, had her manuscript of *Marie-Claire* nursed carefully through to publication and Fargue was taken firmly in hand. Larbaud rescued from oblivion, and constant pressure applied until his volume of *Poèmes* was ready for publication by the NRF in 1912. Ray wrote from Montpellier: "Je trouve admirable votre tentative de sauver Fargue, alors que tout le monde l'abandonnait. [...] Et le service que vous rendez à Fargue, vous le rendez à toute la famille".

In 1922 Larbaud met the faithful companion of his later years, Maria Angela Nebbia. Soon thereafter he began to suffer a Rousseauistic persecution mania, which lay at the root of his rupture with Fargue and the increasing isolation in which he lived, for fear lest his liaison be revealed to his mother. It is pathetic to find him, even after his mother's death in 1930, meeting his beloved in the public-room of a hotel for an hour before returning home to the family villa to sleep alone.

Five years later he himself was struck down by the cerebral hemorrhage which left him half-paralysed and almost speechless for the remaining twenty-two years of his life. His last trip abroad before this calamity was to visit his old friend Marcel Ray, then French ambassador to Albania, and around this journey their relationship enjoyed a brief Indian summer. In February 1935, he told Ray how he refused to join the horde of writers publishing their novel or their book of essays (or both) every year and preferred instead to work chiefly for himself composing bit by bit. "avec les mieux venues de mes pages écrites pour mon amusement", he collected editions of his articles and short stories. And when Ray spoke to him of the growing habit of classifying authors according to the place given in their works to major contemporary problems, his thoughts turned immediately to Baudelaire: "qui a bien été l'homme des 'problèmes de son temps', et qui n'a rien ou presque rien écrit de valable sur ces problèmes, ou en fait de solutions à ces problèmes. [...] Mais à propos de ses théories du genre de 'la Femme Auteur de l'Odyssee', il a écrit mille et mille choses géniales et dont la beauté [...] me ravit".

It is doubtful if Larbaud is read widely today even in France. His style of literature is no longer fashionable. It is the style of a man who believed that to be "heureux et tranquille au sein des bibliothèques" was "encore le meilleur usage qu'on puisse faire de la vie". He was a quiet and distinctive voice amidst the cacophony of the first quarter of this century and a number of his works deserve the epithet of "petite merveille" rightly applied by Ray in this correspondence to his imaginary excursion to his native Bourbonnais, *Allen*. It is to be hoped in this centenary year of his birth, as he writes himself of one of Butler's works, that it is impossible that his own will not have at least fifty readers in each generation. In the meantime this correspondence, whose publication would no doubt have horrified Larbaud, is a fitting testimony to his honesty and integrity.

tion between the roles of the literary historian and the literary critic, and said that to ask the former to do the job of the latter was like asking a political historian to be a political activist.

No letters from Larbaud to Ray survive from the First World War, which was the period during which he spent four years working at his monumental translation of all the major writings of Samuel Butler. After the war the letters tend to become shorter and more business-like, reflecting Larbaud's involvement in a number of different periodicals and his activity as a literary prospector, rediscovering forgotten poets such as Scève, Jean de Lingendes and the minor Romantic Dondey de Santeny, and presenting new writers such as Svevo and Ramón Gómez de la Serna. Sylvia Beach introduced him to James Joyce in December 1920, and in 1927-28 he spent eight months working ten hours a day on the line-by-line revision of the French translation of *Ulysses*, which he regarded as "un des grands bouquins du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle". His labours brought him to the verge of collapse and earned him a stern rebuke from Ray: "Une fois pour toutes j'ai décidé que j'aimais mieux en vous l'artiste que le bénédictin, et que je m'inquiéterais toutes les fois que le second ferait tort au premier."

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# Taming the teatime tigers

By Rosemary Dinnage

ELIZABETH HAY:

*Sambo* the Story of Little Black Sambo and Helen Bannerman  
194pp. Edinburgh: Paul Harris. £7.50.  
0 94505 91 X

Helen Bannerman, author of the *Little Black Sambo* books, was a charming and philanthropic Scottish lady of whom no ill seems ever to have been said, married to an equally public-spirited epidemiologist in the Indian Civil Service. Her life as told by Elizabeth Hay makes extraordinarily dull reading, unless you are particularly interested in the life of the memsahib or in tropical diseases. Even as the author of one of the most popular children's books of all time (thirty-seven reprintings listed in my copy of the traditional version alone) it is doubtful if she would have merited a biography if *Sambo* had not become the victim of a tragicomic controversy.

"Are you for or against?" asked the bookshop assistant as she brought *Little Black Quibba* and *Little Black Mingo* from somewhere behind the scenes where, I imagine, books are generally sent off in plain covers; at the public library the black librarian had produced *Sambo* without a tremor but all the others, just as popular, were out on loan. Naturally I am for exploding crocodiles, tiger pancaques and so on - isn't everyone? But from the 1950s on, *Sambo* et al came increasingly under the accusation of being racist, the charges ranging from portraying black people in bright colours under palm trees instead of - presumably - driving Buicks in grey flannel suits, to presenting them as greedy (*Sambo* eats 169 pancaques, which is certainly going it). The *Sambo* adventures, of course, happen to never-never people in a never-never land that is neither India nor Africa nor - certainly - the American South; alas for Anglo-Indian Mrs Bannerman, her head full of perfectly real exotic scenes, and real snakes and tigers, innocently colouring her figures black to suit the story.

The stories' unclarity - and surely temporary - disgrace was furthered by two factors. The name *Sambo*, more and more associated with the stereotyped "darker", acquired grossly patronizing associations in the United States ("Hey *Sambo*, carry my bag") and so got caught in that curious area of semi-taboo in which "Paddy", for instance, can sound friendly but "Jewess" insulting. Secondly, as Mrs Bannerman had lost control of copyright, the books were produced in vulgarized editions in the United States, and elegant little *Nigger Minstrel*. "Don't tell the copyright of your first book," the author had been told in childhood by

the children's author R. M. Ballantyne: "That's the one that you make the most on." When a friend on home leave from India took *Sambo* - written for the Bannerman children - to the publisher Grant Richards, it was with instructions to guard the copyright; but Richards drew a hard bargain, letters back to India took several weeks to arrive, and it was signed away for ever.

The many later editions of *Sambo* reproduced in the illustrations here, even the "superior" ones, show a disastrous falling-off from Helen Bannerman's unimpeachable, inspired originals. The ultimate catastrophe is "Little *Brave Sambo*" of 1958, on whose cover a monstrously dimpled and fuddled white child flutters cry eyeslashes - the final humiliation, as Elizabeth Hay says, of a once proud child. Perhaps the situation will cool a little now, since it seems that the actual word "black" - now so fashionable that it is used by anyone beige, bronze, or olive - was part of the offence ("coloured" was the genteel thing). As a letter to *The Times* quoted by Elizabeth Hay points out, *Treasure Island* discriminates against the blind and mutilated and Grimm's *Fairy Tales* against the hunchbacked (and, it might have been added, *Peter Rabbit* against Scotsmen and the Billy Bunter stories against almost everyone). In any case, many excellent "black" people do live near palm trees or elephants; why should the Buick-driver discriminate against them?

Recently *Sambo*, who has stoutly survived both vulgarization and social disapproval, has suffered a worse fate - ordeal by psychoanalysis. Elizabeth Hay does not quite bring out the full flavour of the paper written by Mary McDonald, a psychoanalyst from Cleveland, Ohio. *TLS* readers will of course, be familiar with the actual story, dressed in red coat, blue trousers, and purple shoes with crimson linings. *Little Black Sambo* goes for a walk in the jungle. He meets a number of tigers who threaten to eat him, and to save his life has to give away trousers, coat, slippers, and his green umbrella; there is a hitch over the shoes (only two, but tiger wears them on its ears) and the umbrella (tiger ties it to its tail). Tigers then dispute fiercely who, until, chasing each other round and round a tree, they turn into melted butter. *Sambo* retrieves his clothes, father fills a big brass pot with tiger butter, and mother makes a pile of pancaques with it for tea (*Sambo*, as has been mentioned, regrettably eating 169 of them - but he had had a hard day).

All this, says Dr McDonald, can very easily be psychoanalysed. *Sambo*'s lovely clothes represent "transitional objects which enable him to endure developmental separation (sic) from mother, and his umbrella mother of daughters, chase a boy phallic wishes." The picture of the tiger with the umbrella tied to its tail "leaves little doubt about the umbrella's phallic symbolism."

Hiding behind a palm tree, *Sambo* has to watch the vainglorious tigers "take off their clothes and glow and bite one another, catching hold of each other's tails in their mouths" - yes, it is the primal scene he is witnessing, the act of parental intercourse. G-r-r-r, say the tigers, understandably not wanting children to witness courage and, with his umbrella, masculinity. "Holding it with the handle extended in front of him, symbolizing his erection." (Less perceptive illustrators, Dr McDonald mourns, have drawn the umbrella closed - surely more phallic than an open one?)

"It hardly comes as a surprise to find that the aftermath of the primal scene is little tigers - babies," she continues. "The melted butter symbolically put into the big brass pot - the butter is combined with the egg - in the pancaques - and the result is yellow and brown little tigers." There is a good bit more about the pancaques' colour and the

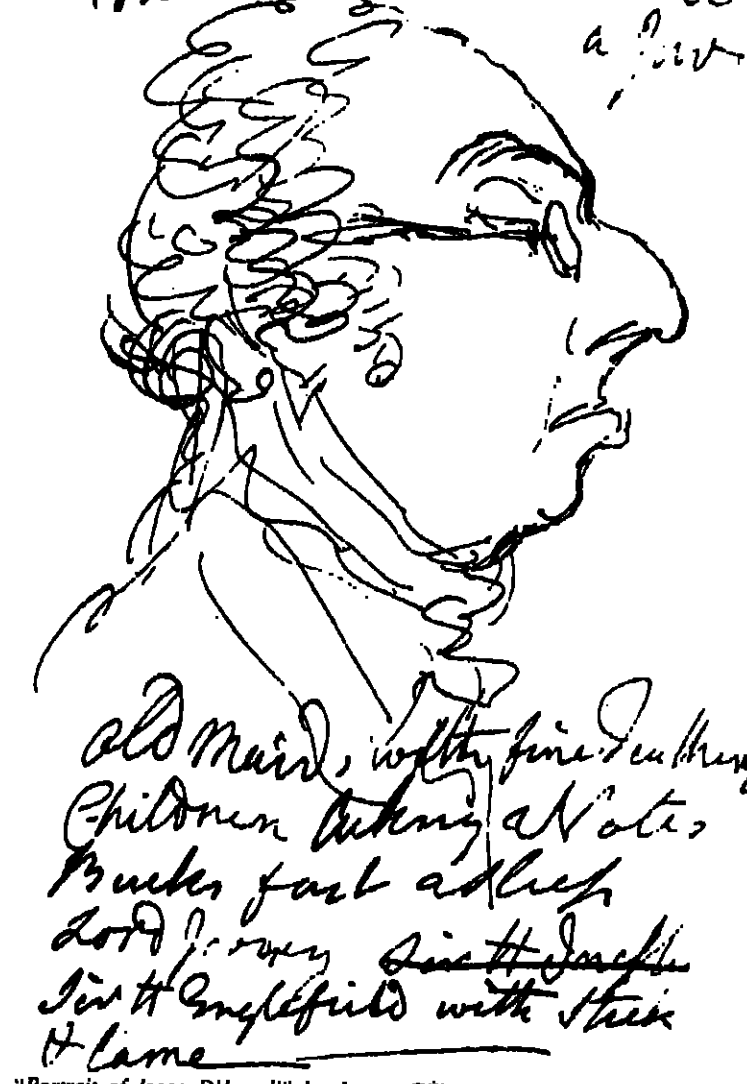
"gastrointestinal" theory of conception which is, frankly, rather off-putting for pancake lovers. *Sambo* eats 169 of them not to demonstrate the greed of black races nor - oddly - because Dr McDonald finds anything suggestive in the number, but because he longs to make a baby himself - possibly 169 babies. There is a snag, Dr McDonald admits, in that there were four, not two, tigers involved in the libidinous scramble round the tree, but this was arranged to disguise the identity of the parental couple (or perhaps, being black and dreadfully immoral, they were swingers?).

The whole story, says Dr McDonald, is clearly based on Mrs Bannerman's own memories of childhood sexuality, which she knows include penis envy, masturbation, and castration. At the age of two, the author probably witnessed a "primal scene exposure" - though this, she admits, speculative. In conclusion, the whole interpretation "can only enhance the reader's respect for *Little Black Sambo*"; and as for the charge of racism against Mrs Bannerman, who "led a highly worthwhile life which was directly beneficial to India's dark-skinned poor people", it was doubtless the book's expression of the dark forces within her which led her to be so unprejudiced and generally well-meaning. "Like peace-loving Alfred Nobel, appalled at the destructive power of the dynamite he had discovered, Helen Bannerman would, I believe, be appalled at the destructive turn taken by the elemental forces in her story."

She would be appalled, and more than appalled, at the flood of dizzying rubbish stimulated by her little book, but fortunately died full of years and wisdom in 1946, when the world still had sterner things on its mind. Not that I do not agree that *Sambo* can be analysed. One of the secrets of the series' success, for instance, is the right balance that is kept between terror and safety, essential to stories for the very young: there are the most dreadful dangers about, but if you keep your pecker up (wide Dr McDonald) you will come cosily through. Then there is what in Ohio they might call the ego-strengthening aspect of the tale: the gentle mental that if you are foolish enough to care about being the grandest in the jungle you are likely to end up with purple slippers on your ears and even to come to a - literally - sticky end.

Plunging after Dr McDonald into the deep end, what I find in the *Sambo* books is not parental intercourse or phallic umbrellas, but a wonderfully carefree access to the primitive, to eating and killing and destroying and surviving, within the prim and formal framework of the tale. Omality is rampant, not only where dragons are concerned but in frogs jumping out alive from snakes or the crocodile's stomach and blowing them both to glory. Mouths are viciously wide; but *Sambo*, Quibba, etc are not eaten, and always end up with something nice for tea. Nor is there any sentiment about disposal of villains: when the crocodile has exploded, his toothy head, with Scottish thrift, is used as a table where Mingo and his mongoose spread a checked tablecloth for tea. *Sambo* with his mongoose, and open Mingo's legs dangling over his safety in a jungle world. Ruthlessness, in this jungle, is innocent and prescient. So long life to *Sambo*, Quibba, Mingo, and Quasha, and thumbs down on all who threaten their blameless existence.

*Life is real only then, when 'I am',* the "Third Series" of *All and Everything*, a meditative trilogy by the Russian-born mystic G. I. Gurdjieff has recently been published (177pp, Routledge and Kegan Paul, £6.95, 0 7100 0887 2). Composed largely of autobiographical fragments, the work is now generally available in this country for the first time. Like earlier volumes, it promotes Gurdjieff's declared aim of helping the reader achieve "a true representation of the real world instead of the illusory world he now perceives".



"Portrait of Isaac D'Sorrell" by James Gilray, with notes by Gilray for his print "Scientific Researches". It is one of the illustrations in an article on "Rowlandson and Gilray in the Aachenhouse Bequest" by John Reilly in the latest issue (April 1981) of *The Yale University Library Gazette*. The bequest, which was recently made to the library, consists of a collection of nearly 2,000 original prints by the London print-seller Francis Harvey who had his shop at No 4 St James's Street.

## Travelling tribally

By Nesta Roberts

NAOMI MITCHISON:  
*Mucking Around*  
Five Continents over Fifty Years  
147pp. Gollancz. £7.50.  
0 575 02945 5

"I had done something very daring - I had slipped for ever out of the combinations of my young days and into long shifts and matching wide-legged knickers, either of lawn or silk - real silk, of course." So, with one sentence in the first chapter of this account, based on letters and diaries, of her travels in five continents over fifty years, Naomi Mitchison conveys the atmosphere of an age that, already, is "one with Nineteen and the years." Here was genuine, not dogmatic liberation ("How loose and cool they were, compared with the stuffiness of other summers!"), here was luxury, here was the modernism still free of "tins and turds" and Athens of smog, here was a Europe of long journeys in slow trains whose peasant crafts had not yet been geared to the tourist trade. The early 1920s were an excellent time in which to be in one's own early twenties, particularly when one was blessed with a modicum of privilege, an immoderate allowance of intelligence and that avidity for experience and flexibility in face of it that makes a traveller out of a tourist.

They say that the gifted make their own luck, and the experiences here described are worthy of the record. When Lady Mitchison first went to Shetland for Uphellia, the first feast which helps the islanders to support the winter dark, the Northern Lights shimmered above Lerwick. "He gave me a delicious meal, I recollect a creamy pudding shaped like a rabbit," visited the Soviet Union

before World War Two and been in Ghana for the first African Independence Day. On that last occasion she wore her national dress, "a white shirt with a tartan scarf brooch on the shoulder", and, when the bus-load of journalists in which she was travelling became soldered into the exultant crowds, was the only one who had the enterprise to slip out of it and join in the High Life which had been set off by Nkrumah. It was, she remembers, a constant collage of partners, dark bright eyes, beaming smiles, a bath of happiness.

She writes enviably, with the kind of apparently casual precision which, though, if rarely, it can be achieved by effort, far more often comes by grace; but what gives this book its quality is the author's capacity for relating to her fellow creatures, irrespective of differences of language and culture. She is equally at ease with the fisherman of Out Skerries and the frontier guards of long-ago Hungary, members of the Botswana tribe of which, since 1963, she has been the adopted mother and shareholder; black and white, in Memphis, Tennessee. "Aren't you being rather tribal, Lady Mitchison?" asked a slightly shocked member of the Botswana government who found her dispensing goat stew and mabele porridge at a party she was giving for a hundred or so of the tribe's older women. Presumably he did not stay to see her taking part in the ritual singing and dancing that followed.

She was in Tennessee in the 1930s when, with Jennie Lee, she spoke at an illegal meeting of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Both felt guilty about leaving the members to their struggle. Lady Mitchison had a particular empathy with their black chaplain, scarcely recovered from a forty-day prison sentence. "And a beating-up. What could she do for him to ease their leaving?" She found the perfect gesture. "I knelt down in the middle of the scruffy road and asked for his blessing."

M. S. SILK AND J. P. STERN:  
*Nietzsche on tragedy*  
41pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£27.50.  
0 521 23262 7

There is no denying the importance of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. Although it was his author's earliest work, and many of the views expressed in it were later to be abandoned, it contains, at least in outline, the chief elements of his philosophy, and no one who wishes to understand the origins of that philosophy can neglect it. Considered as a work of scholarship, it has grave faults, which scandalized the learned world at the moment of its first appearance; but though Nietzsche then and for some years afterwards occupied a chair of classical philology, it is a great mistake to judge the book in terms of scholarship. It reveals, indeed, a remarkable insight into the nature of Greek religion, so that in spite of all its errors it can easily be seen, after the lapse of more than a century, to have made a notable contribution to the understanding of Greek thought. But that should not prevent us from seeing that it was not intended as a work of learning, but as an attempt to utilize the understanding of antiquity in order to construct a philosophy for the author's own contemporaries. To that end he made extensive use of modern writings as well as ancient, and particularly of the whole German culture of the preceding century, above all Goethe, Schopenhauer and Wagner; for a complete appreciation of the genesis of his book, these as well as the Greeks, must be taken into account. To judge from the influence which Nietzsche's work has exerted, never greater than at present, his unusual synthesis, what in his own terminology M. S. Silk and J. P. Stern refer to as his "centaur", must be acknowledged to have had considerable success.

Accordingly the appearance of the most detailed study of the work yet published, the joint work of a Germanist and authority on Nietzsche and a classical scholar known for his interest in literary theory, is a notable event in Nietzschean studies. The work has been carried out with great thoroughness, and has the defects of this admirable and very German quality. The distribution of material between the chapters is confusing, for the discussion of several central topics is oddly divided between different sections of the work, and the writing lacks crispness and conciseness, so that the book is decidedly too long and most of it is somewhat heavy going. But the authors are familiar with the very great quantity of literature, both primary and secondary, that is relevant, and their critical analysis throws light on almost every corner of the complicated subject. Readers who wish to understand *The Birth of Tragedy* and its significance for philosophy, history, scholarship and religion will find their work extremely valuable.

One might do worse than start with the fourth chapter, which contains a very detailed summary of the argument of *The Birth of Tragedy*, executed with great care and likely to be of use to many readers. One might well read it in close conjunction with the tenth and final chapter, "Style and Philosophy", which offers a running commentary, from the standpoint indicated by its title, upon the argument of the book, section by section. From this commentary, when requiring explanation, one might turn back to the other chapters of the book, using the table of contents and the admirable index.

The book starts with a chapter called "Germany and Greece", which is a short sketch of the place of Hellenism in German culture in the century before Nietzsche; it is well done, though it might say more about the place of Hellenism in the aesthetics of Goethe, an author whose influence on Nietzsche cannot easily be overrated, though it may

## The Dionysiac centaur

by Hugh Lloyd-Jones

references to Aeschylus are not.

Without accepting his sister's claim, that Nietzsche had been planning a great work dealing with many aspects of Greek antiquity, one may well feel that the impact of Wagner, while providing the author with an inspiration which lends the work much of its power, has distorted his attitude to Greek tragedy. Nietzsche's own later comments on the book seem to me more to the point than Silk and Stern seem willing to allow. They go to much trouble to establish the undoubtedly correct opinion that Nietzsche wholly misconceives the admittedly inadequate evidence for the nature of fifth-century Greek music, and so much concerned to make Greek literature accessible to the general reader that he imported into his picture of it too much of his contemporary world.

Silk and Stern of course recognize that Wilamowitz was right in drawing attention to the many faults of *The Birth of Tragedy* considered as a work of scholarship; but they justly argue that Nietzsche's Dionysus and Apollo are symbolic figures, by no means to be equated with the deities worshipped by the Greeks under those names, and having much in common with the will and the idea in the philosophy of Schopenhauer. This they do in the course of the long sixth chapter, "Nietzsche's Account of Greece", which contains much valuable matter, though it provokes occasional disagreement. In their treatment of the historical Dionysus, they are not quite immune from the till lately almost universal error of mistaking the cult myth of the god for a historical reminiscence of the origins of his worship; in their treatment of Apollo, they seem unaware that Walter Burkert has given good reasons for thinking that he was composed from an oriental divinity of great antiquity and a Peloponnesian god of the assembly of adult males (*apella*), from which he appears to take his name. While reproaching Nietzsche for his indifference to the social side of Greek religion, they reiterate the commonplace that Dionysus was a god of the lower orders; it would be interesting to see some concrete evidence for this opinion. Crediting the chorus of Greek tragedy with "excessive insight", they offer an interpretation of the first stasimon of the *Antigone* that takes no account of its dramatic context; recent scholarship tends to accept the argument of Gerhard Müller that the chorus has a state no more privileged than that of any other actor. More important, they seem not enough emancipated from the old-fashioned view of Euripides as an innovating rationalist to see how mistaken Nietzsche's view of that poet as the propagator of what he takes to be rationalism really is; they quote with apparent approval a flabby dictionary article

assumptions of books like his studies of Pindar and of Plato, are not, indeed, congenial to the modern reader; but he often wrote of literature not only with unique knowledge but with great intelligence and sympathetic understanding. Not only his once celebrated translations, but the greater part of his writings is written in a style a good deal more comprehensible to the general reader than that of the learned book which I am now reviewing, so that the authors' statement that neither Wilamowitz nor his profession showed any serious interest in removing the barrier between their subject and contemporary life must be most sharply contradicted. Indeed, Wilamowitz, like his great follower and admirer Gilbert Murray, was so much concerned to make Greek literature accessible to the general reader that he imported into his picture of it too much of his contemporary world.

Silk and Stern of course recognize that Wilamowitz was right in drawing attention to the many faults of *The Birth of Tragedy* considered as a work of scholarship; but they justly argue that Nietzsche's Dionysus and Apollo are symbolic figures, by no means to be equated with the deities worshipped by the Greeks under those names, and having much in common with the will and the idea in the philosophy of Schopenhauer. This they do in the course of the long sixth chapter, "Nietzsche's Account of Greece", which contains much valuable matter, though it provokes occasional disagreement. In their treatment of the historical Dionysus, they are not quite immune from the till lately almost universal error of mistaking the cult myth of the god for a historical reminiscence of the origins of his worship; in their treatment of Apollo, they seem unaware that Walter Burkert has given good reasons for thinking that he was composed from an oriental divinity of great antiquity and a Peloponnesian god of the assembly of adult males (*apella*), from which he appears to take his name. While reproaching Nietzsche for his indifference to the social side of Greek religion, they reiterate the commonplace that Dionysus was a god of the lower orders; it would be interesting to see some concrete evidence for this opinion. Crediting the chorus of Greek tragedy with "excessive insight", they offer an interpretation of the first stasimon of the *Antigone* that takes no account of its dramatic context; recent scholarship tends to accept the argument of Gerhard Müller that the chorus has a state no more privileged than that of any other actor. More important, they seem not enough emancipated from the old-fashioned view of Euripides as an innovating rationalist to see how mistaken Nietzsche's view of that poet as the propagator of what he takes to be rationalism really is; they quote with apparent approval a flabby dictionary article

The eighth chapter concludes with a section headed "Aesthetics and Metaphysics" which contains some of the most important matter in the book. The authors show how little Nietzsche is interested in drama in the specific sense; his theory would apply almost as well to the *Iliad*, which George Steiner is surely right to call "the primer of tragic art", an opinion shared, if an anecdote that is at least *bona fide* can be relied upon, by Aeschylus himself. Nietzsche, they argue, wishes to reform the world by restoring what he calls a tragic culture; but he shows little interest in the social patterns of such a culture, for his appeal is directed to the individual and through art. They rightly complain that the distinction which he draws between the Apollonian element and that Socraticism which in his view caused the death of tragedy is too vague; it would have been less so if he admitted the existence of an Apollonian component in all Dionysiac art. More vigorous results from Nietzsche's uneasy consciousness that Christianity has certain Dionysiac features; he is unwilling to say this openly, for fear of conferring on Christianity a dignity which he is unwilling to allow it. The authors point out that the term "redemption" (*Erlösung*) and the concept of the world-artist have unmistakable religious overtones. The ultimate concern of the book, they rightly say, is with man's tragic condition; if Kierkegaard is the first existentialist and Schopenhauer is the first to present aesthetics as an alternative to existence, Nietzsche's book, by identifying aesthetics with the existentialist, is the first essay in pre-Christian existentialism.

## Death in Trieste

By Patrick Bowles

DOMINIQUE FERNANDEZ:  
*Signor Giovanni*  
96pp. Paris: Balland  
2 7158 0288 9

On May 31, 1768, a well-to-do, fifty-year-old bachelor, who asked to be called "Signor Giovanni", checked into the Osteria Grande in Trieste. Staying in the next room to a petty thief and some cook named Francesco Arcangel, who had arrived two days before, Signor Giovanni sat next to Arcangel on his first evening at the hotel, and seemed eager to make his acquaintance. During the next week they dined together on several occasions in Arcangel's room, taking long post-prandial strolls by the harbour in the evening. Apparently intent on impressing his new friend, Signor Giovanni boasted of having connections with some of the highest political and ecclesiastical figures of Europe, inadvertently displaying some gold and silver medallions, offered to him, he said, by an empress. Duly impressed, Arcangel stabbed Signor Giovanni to death in the latter's room on the morning of June 8.

Although Signor Giovanni was able, before succumbing to his wounds six hours later, to confess to a priest, draw up his will, and give a detailed account of his life, the police he refused to reveal his true identity. When the police looked at his passport, however, they discovered that he was in fact Johann Joachim Winckelmann, prefect of antiquities at the Vatican.

In this little book Dominique Fernandez offers the intriguing and not unconvincing hypothesis that Winckelmann's death was not, as biographers have held, the result of avoidable - than the deaths of Joe Orton and Pasolini.

When possible, and frequently when it is not possible, Fernandez has translated Winckelmann's neoclassical yearnings into psychoanalytical shorthand, thus "discovering" what has long been known: that Winckelmann's writings - like, one supposes, those of most middle-aged, unmarried Hellenists - are "merely a disguised defence of Socratic love." But it will require considerably more evidence than Fernandez does, the status of exemplary homosexual sufferer.

Although *Signor Giovanni* is included in a series of short novels, Fernandez has unfortunately made only a half-hearted attempt to work his facts into fiction, and thus very readable little volume is thus more accurately described as an essay. It consists largely of quotations or paraphrases from the sources assembled in a book entitled *L'Assassinio di Winckelmann*, published in Italy in 1971 by Longanesi and cited by Fernandez.



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## commentary

### Out of the shadows

By Tanya Harrod

Meninsky  
Museum of Modern Art, Oxford.

David Bomberg, Mark Gertler and Bernard Meninsky came from similar Jewish east European backgrounds and were at the Slade in and around 1912. They were all successful before and during the First World War, creating ambitious and admired art. Bomberg was the most experimental and acclaimed, making entirely original works in a style which might best be described as geometrical constructivism. Gertler and Meninsky were primarily figurative artists drawing inspiration from the neo-primitive areas of Post-Impressionism. Bomberg exhibited regularly, working towards a fluid abstract style based on landscape studies. He was entirely overlooked in the 1930s and 40s and was only reinstated as a major British artist after his death in 1957. Gertler, always the most self-doubting of men, was haunted by the assurance of his youthful work and committed suicide in 1938. Meninsky felt desperate uncertainty about the coherence of his own art, and took his life in 1950.

Why did things go wrong for so many artists in Britain after the First World War? In crude terms, during the post-war years the buying public liked bad art, "Flowers and still lives with jolly little ornaments" as Wyndham Lewis put it, while those who supported the avant-garde preferred French paintings. In this context the cultural hegemony of Bloomsbury has perhaps been exaggerated, but Clive Bell actively dismissed home grown art, calling it "a curious and partisan exception of Duncan Grant". In 1920 Bell wrote of Bomberg, Lamb, Lewis, the Nash brothers, the Spencer brothers and William Roberts: "Were they really born to be painters?"

### From centre to punk

By Robert Hewison

Brian Clarke: New Paintings, Constructions and Prints  
RIBA

MARTIN HARRISON:  
Brian Clarke  
206pp. Quartet Books. £15.00.  
0 7043 2281 1

The publication of Martin Harrison's monograph on the twenty-eight-year-old painter and stained-glass designer Brian Clarke coincides with an exhibition of Clarke's latest paintings, constructions and prints at the Royal Institute of British Architects in Portland Place. Since Clarke's medium is visual, the works shown

The impression on entering the exhibition hall is appropriately cool and architectural, reflecting Clarke's prevailing interest in integrating art and architecture. Sixteen canvases and constructions are on show; the majority are six feet high, and are almost uniformly exercises in patterns of Swiss crosses, closed and open squares, and a vocabulary of signs whose illusions are summed up in the title of the dominant piece, a twenty-five feet high modular arrangement of panels, "Blue Counterpart 2". In the clear cross-light of the hall, it is as though the other works are reverently arranged around this soaring monument to nullity.

Brian Clarke can be described as a very successful artist. Since the age of thirteen he has had an art school

wonder. But of this I am sure: their friends merely make them look silly by comparing them with contemporary French masters. With hindsight we can see that the best British artists working between the wars - particularly those so offensively attacked by Bell - were all in different ways aware of French art but none the less un-French. Yet the School of Paris could cast a long shadow over the unconfident artist. Gertler wrote in 1929 of Matisse and Picasso: "Ahl those aristocrats! moving so high above me - what a rough clumsy peasant they make me feel."

Meninsky's retrospective at Oxford's Museum of Modern Art reveals a similarly troubled spirit. His heroes were Cézanne, Derain and Picasso. Curiously their influence was chiefly confined to his painting; Meninsky pointed in a much more modern way than he drew. His drawings were fluent, beautiful and entirely traditional, concerned with outline rather than structure and for that reason irrelevant to his desire to paint like Cézanne. The best are the 1918 sketches of his wife and baby son. Perhaps it is understandable, therefore, that his most resolved paintings tended to be familial portraits.

The "Portrait of a Boy" of 1917 (not in the show, but illustrated in the excellent catalogue) is a wonderful picture. The pose and hieratic effect surely derive from Bronzino, but he achieves volume (as did Stanley Spencer and Henry Lamb at that date) through the articulation of flat areas of light and shade. "Portrait of David" (1923) is equally fine, although here the debt to Cézanne is evident. It is close to the "Boy in the Red Waistcoat" in mood, in the employment of a draped background and, up to a point, in the way that it is painted. Perhaps the best of this group is "David with a Cap" (1925), where again he seems closer to the Mannerists than to the modernists. His son's elongated form is thrust right up against the picture plane, the perspective is distorted, the finish is



"Portrait of David" (1923), from the exhibition reviewed here.

smooth: the whole effect is one of elegance.

It seems likely that Meninsky did not feel portraiture to be central to his art. He revealed his modernist ambitions in still life, landscape and the nude. In his weaker works the influences are all too easily dissected: what may be called French marks, based on the brushwork of Cézanne, inform the landscape and still lifes. A series of paintings of his women show that Meninsky had looked hard at Picasso's neo-classical works.

has remained in overdrive. Some people think that his attitude and serious art are mutually exclusive, but they're usually very boring people.

Punk is now behind Clarke, but Ritz has taken over and the critical and cultural climax of his life so far came in 1980 when "Time Lag Zero" was unveiled by the photographer Patrick Lichfield at Langan's Brasserie in London's West End, at a reception to mark Olympus (Optical UK Ltd)'s fifth year in England, the whole event being scrupulously recorded by Granada's cameras.

What more condensed summary of contemporary values can you get than that? (Meanwhile, on *Kaleidoscope*, he had threatened a critic with a "fat lip".)

Lifestyle apart, Martin Harrison's argument is that Clarke has been ignored by the "art set-up" because his work is in the Constructivist tradition. This would suggest that Ben Nicholson and Victor Pasmore (both unmentioned) have been unable to make a living, but Harrison's description of Clarke's sources explodes any serious claim that might be made for an intellectual perception on the artist's part of the significance of the Constructivist movement. The Swiss cross which dominates Clarke's work from 1978 onwards may be described as "an archetypal symbol of structural solidity", but its source is the grid reference point of the plumbline-and-pencil life drawing practice of the 1950s, the distinctive feature of William Coldstream's post-war work (unmentioned).

As a monograph, Harrison's work is inadequate. The quotations already made should give an idea of

its naively adulatory style. There is no bibliography, list of exhibitions, chronology, index or proper account of Clarke's architectural stained glass. Nor is there any mention of money. The book is lavishly illustrated, but many of the photographs are used to imply an association between Clarke's work and genuine Constructivist pieces, and make no true critical connection. The plates themselves are confusingly labelled in a mixture of roman and arabic numerals which seems to have left the designer with some embarrassing cross references to fill in at page proof stage.

None of the foregoing means that Clarke will not continue to enjoy a successful career as an executor of quasi-architectural commissions for large organizations who want something contemporary, but decorative rather than demanding. His latest panels and stained-glass for Olympia's offices in Hamburg look most attractive, and the architectonic is plainly his strong point. Harrison's words detract from the serial calm of the works. But one of Clarke's latest screen prints sums up his limitations. Entitled "The Cultures" it is a "tribute" to C. P. Snow and his lecture depicting the division between art and science. Accordingly, there is a graph paper overlay on the design, but the subject is simply a collage of art reproductions - Mondrian, Moholy Nagy, Massacio, etc., and photographs of Einstein, Snow and others. A Swiss cross has been drawn over da Vinci's analysis of the proportions of man. It is as culturally and critically in the mainstream as any second year art student's pin board.

Forthcoming exhibitions include *Le-ger* at the Riverside Studios from August 1.

# TLS Children's books

## The exaltation of childhood

By Claude Rawson

FRED INGLIS:

The Promise of Happiness  
Value and Meaning in Children's Fiction

333pp. Cambridge University Press.  
£17.50.  
0 521 23142 6

"Over the last three hundred years... the child, having survived fifty per cent infant mortality, the factory, the workhouse, the coalmine, Mrs Trimmer and Victorian piety and the Sunday school and the blackboard, compulsory education and cod liver oil for all, has emerged triumphant as the liberated figure of today before whose sensitivities and vulnerabilities we all quail". These words from an unpublished lecture by Penelope Lively remind us that it is only recently that the child has acquired recognition as a being worthy of full human respect - or perhaps even a little more. He (or as Fred Inglis, bent on rectifying another of society's injustices, might prefer to put it, she) has had to survive oppression, indifference and idealization before emerging into this state. And in this regard his history resembles that of other disadvantaged groups, including women and the "subject races". Less than three centuries ago, Swift spoke of the native Irish as "altogether as inconceivable as the Women and Children". Various ironies lurked in the comment, but the inconsiderability of women and children was simply assumed.

There is a long history of cruelty to children, and a sentimental historiography of progressive emergence from this. One historian cited by Inglis has proposed a slow transition from an "Infanticidal Mode (Antiquity to fourth century AD)" to better things: we have apparently now reached the "Helping Mode". More sophisticated historians draw a less simple picture, and some of the recorded horrors from the past occurred in periods when life was harsher and more violent all round. But of the fact of widespread cruelty to children, apparently accepted as normal behaviour through the ages, there seems to be no doubt. The other consistent evidence we have is of the child's "insignificance". One aspect of this is the "extraordinary silence about children" in the demographic records of "the pre-industrial world". And there are relatively few works of literature before the poems of Blake and Wordsworth and the novels of the Victorian age in which children, or the childhood state, are

given serious and extended treatment.

Even there the treatment is frequently at a level of high idealization, or else involves a sentimentally intensified compassion designed to draw attention to suffering and injustice rather than to portray the fully realized human creature. The child-victim of industrial exploitation is often presented in Victorian fiction with the same heartrending simplification as the Negro slave in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and for the same reasons. The result is a saintly stereotype better adapted to the urgent objectives of reformist persuasion than to the total "truth" which Flaubert demanded for the novel; and it is in some ways a humanely vulgarized extension of the exaltations of the child and of childhood by the great Romantic poets.

Reaction to both oppression and "inconsiderability", as in the case of conquered peoples or of women, often begins by taking the form of an idealization of some kind. The noble savage, the mistress as perfection of womanhood, and the angelically pure and submissive wife, are the best-known examples of a typical process. With children, even this idealizing stage came rather late. It is not simply synonymous with the child's emergence into fully human status, though (as with "savages" and women) it was one of the early signs and perhaps a conditioning feature.

Part of the "inconsiderability" of children probably had to do with the combination of a high birth rate and a high mortality rate, in periods before contraception and medicine were sufficiently developed to control both. Children came so frequently that they were in one sense no big deal, and parents had also to steel themselves into some degree of callousness because so many died at birth or in childhood. A protective unreadiness to think of the very young as fully-fledged persons would be understandable.

It is at all events a fact that children often did not seem to count very much more than savages, or slaves, or other groups overtly defined as inferior or subhuman. Cruelty was part of this second-class status. But the relationship of such a status to "cruelty" is not a simple one in the case of children. Running against it would be such factors as the parental bond, or the peculiar advantage which children had over other second-class humans that they could achieve the more respected status merely by growing up. Swift's satirical *Modest Proposal* would



"We missed the train. Two hours to wait! On Lime Street Station, Liverpool." - one of Posy Simmonds's illustrations to *Kit Wright's Hot Dog and Other Poems*, reviewed on page 843.

deny them the opportunity of doing this, though since they were the children of Irish savages and thus doubly subhuman there would be no great poignancy built into the situation. What a modern reader might not realize is that *A Modest Proposal* is not especially or primarily against cruelty to children or the poor or the Irish, for most of whom the author felt distaste, and that it exhibits no tenderness towards them. The onslaught is against economic mismanagement and political ineptitude among victim and oppressor alike, and the focus is less on the suffering of the victims than on the culpable absurdity of all those responsible for an absurd predicament. If we contrast *A Modest Proposal* with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, another work about the buying and selling of human bodies, we realize how far Swift is from seeking to generate the same kind of compassion over maltreatment, injustice, the break-up of family ties and affections. He didn't set much store by the latter, and his pamphlet shows the victims as rather bad at genuine family feeling anyway. Certainly no child is treated with the pathos, and with the centrality of attention, which we should take for granted in many nineteenth-century novels.

There is in all this a political dimension, both by analogy and

more directly (as in protests against child-labour in novels). The Wordsworthian exaltation of the childhood state coincides with the new attention accorded by literature and the new importance given by political thought to "children, outcasts, idiots, foreigners" at the time of the French Revolution. It is not simply that children were becoming a political category, but that concepts of liberty, tolerance, humanity, which received political expression at one level tended to spread by analogy or extension to other modes of life. There was too a new focus on the idea of growing up. Where it had once been a matter of evolution from a more or less subhuman to a human status, the new idealized sense of the value of the childhood state entailed the feeling that it was this which vitalized and purified the later maturity, rather than being outgrown in favour of it. Ideally one should not "grow out of" childhood, but allow childhood to "grow into" our older selves. "The child is father of the man": "Blake and Wordsworth captured a new and confident sense that the men and women who had grown up from the children they had all once been were limitlessly capable of embodying an entirely new social order."

With a few appropriate adaptations, such words could be used of

Montaigne on the subject of American Indians. And just as the "noble savage" of the primitivists had his noble counterpart in the British savages of apologists for empire or of Hobbes's account of natural man, so the idealized child of Romantic tradition acquired his Hobbesian counterpart in Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. What is interesting is how long it has taken for this aspect of the child to become embodied in an extended literary text, though "facts" about the natural cruelty of children had long been available for anyone to see in some nursery rhymes, and in children's slang and rituals. That this came so late is perhaps itself a measure of how long it has taken for the child to emerge fully from his state of "inconsiderability".

The natural momentum of current bids, or perhaps all bids, for the "human rights" of those who are or are felt to be underprivileged, is to pass from a phase of over-correction and inflated protestation to claims of "equality" of some sort. The claims include some solemn educational doctrines to the effect that children should be spoken to and treated as grown-ups, which taken to an extreme might seem to deny any logical place for children's books at all; or the old-fashioned pseudo-equality of that ghastly category, "children of all ages", which leads to a wide choice of nightmares, from anthologies of nonsense verse to the novels of Tolkien. More interestingly, Penelope Lively, who has recently been writing adult fiction but first established herself as a children's author, has insisted that she doesn't especially think of herself in any self-conscious way as writing "children's books", and has been inclined to play down the distinction, though she knows that to deny it altogether would be merely patronizing. In another way, her children's books are remarkable for their easy ability to portray and respect children as active and thinking beings, without pretending that they aren't children.

One of the best examples I know of the natural fusion of the two modes of fiction is *Going Back*, normally classed among her children's books. Its narrator is a grown woman who revisits her childhood home for the last time after her father's death. In remembering her early life, she recaptures her childhood state of mind and renders the child's idiom and feeling very vividly but without ever forgetting or disguising the fact that the narrative is a grown-up's sympathetic reconstruction of a child's

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state of mind. His unforced movement between the child and adult perspectives has a freshness lacking in such more ambitious and sophisticated achievements as *What Mr. Knew* or *The Go-Between* (Ingis's account of this book seems to me out of focus, the product of a reductive determination to discuss the author as a "historical" novelist.)

The interpretation of the two worlds is even more inevitable than the penetration of "imperialist" values in the literature of racial emancipation. If black skins were white masks even in their most assertive declarations of negritude, the child's book is normally written by the grown-up, who has been a child. Not surprisingly, children's books and adult ones are in an infinite variety of ways parodies of one another. Ballantine's *Coral Island* leads to *Lord of the Flies*, which is a reversal of the earlier book's pieties about the upstanding virtue of good English boys as compared with savages who commit "unspeakable rites". It also leads to *Heart of Darkness*, which not only reverses any notion of a black monopoly of such rites, but in the later stages of the search for Kurtz acquires an element of the boy's adventure story, a hushed suspenseful tracking through the jungle, conscious of its literary origins. "I kept to the track... I was circumventing Kurtz as though it had been a boyish game".

*Lord of the Flies* has all the surface of a boys' adventure book, and its protagonists are all boys. So Ingis can say the book "now stands well across the margins of children's and adults' novels". I don't know how widely or spontaneously it is read by children. It has frequently been set as a GCE text, but that is not the same thing and may even mean the opposite. Many of its ironies are for adults who may remember reading books like *Coral Island* in their youth and are likely to enjoy being disabused, and not for children who may recognize the behaviour as distinct from the ironies, but can get the former neat from straightforward unironic works. I assume it means little to them that the white boys are shown to be as savage as the tribal native used to be thought.

In an autobiographical chapter, Ingis speaks of the neo-chivalric heroes of the comic strips and other popular media, the footballers and cowboys and fighter pilots, as figures in whom there is "no strain or gap" between how they act and how they should act. They embody an effortless and unquestioning obedience to an ideal of honour which may in real life entail a "breaking strain for many people". "It is part of the

timeless quality in a child's view of the world that he or she learns and reverences values quite innocent of any relative qualifications". Thus his own early reading of *Bulldog Drummond* and other "intermittently awfully books" of that kind was unaffected by elements which are "unavoidably there: their relentless snobbery, their incipient Fascism, their arrogance and brutality". What he experienced within that framework was not any release of "adolescent anti-Semitism" but "pure admiration for the reckless, athletic courage of the hero, the simplicity and vividness of his moral and pugnacious reflexes... his sense of fairness".

Ingis's reading of superior specimens in Kipling and Buchan is an enhanced version of this, and the process is illuminated by a passage from Lawrence on his early love of Nonconformist hymns. It shows the ability of a relatively crude medium to enrich the imagination, to fill it with wonder and delight, in a curiously selective process that remains unaffected by banality or vulgar didacticism or sentimentality or ugliness. The essential point is that the child's mind is not easily predictable by the "liberal parent's mischievous" self-consciousness, rightly concerned in its way about, for example, the brutalizing implications of heroic codes. A principal assumption behind most of Ingis's arguments is that neither children nor other readers really "identify" themselves with the "vicarious experience" of their fictional entertainments, but that these feed into and out of the continuous totality of daily existence. On this topic, Ingis achieves an almost Johnsonian return to first principles.

The main discussion of "heroic" models of behaviour, from Homer to Kipling and beyond is in Chapter Six. Ingis begins unhappily with the charge of "Fascism". It's a foolish and imprecise term outside its precise political sense, and in various ways the wrong nettle to grasp. But so by way of a borrowed notion that Fascism has to do with "restoration of the body" and the assertion of "the individual against the machine". Both German and Italian Fascism stressed collective tribal might and imperial destiny more than any "individual" self-realization. Far from scorning the "machine", they glorified mechanized warfare as a beautiful "metallization of the human body" (Marinetti's words in praise of Mussolini's Abyssinian exploits). "Man's dominion" over "machinery" meant not a return to organic unmechanized vigour, but the mastery of machinery to extend man's speed

and force and power to destroy. "The fiery orchids of machine guns", the big tanks and spectacular bombs over which the bands of Fascism waxed lyrical, owed their charm precisely to a transfiguration of the body in the machine, the organic turned mechanical. When Auden compared epic and schoolboy heroisms (to which he was by no means merely hostile) with aspects of modern Fascism, it was certainly not for any individualist or antimachinist ideal. But in Auden's day, Fascism was Fascism and Auden knew, as Ingis apparently doesn't, what the word meant.

But even without these awkward facts, the history of Fascism in our time has so discredited itself that the word cannot be used without associations which both distract and detract from what Ingis is trying to say. He senses this occasionally, but it does not prevent him from flailing about in search of ways for the word to "be used, just momentarily, in a quite nonhostile sense". Why bother? Nevertheless, he captures extremely well the increasingly difficult fortunes of the heroic in this century. That picture of manliness suffered terribly, particularly on the Somme, not because men were unable to embody it in those dreadful circumstances, but because they did so pointlessly. The courage was available in great plenty, but it was betrayed by the institutions which demanded it as a duty.

He goes on to give one of the best formulations I have seen of the conditions under which the ideal could still be activated, mostly in an ironic perspective:

Consequently, that manliness has played an increasingly ambiguous part in growing up in Britain and the USA since 1917. Appeals to its most noble version - courage in battle - made sense after Dunkirk and Pearl Harbor, but always in such a distinctly ironic and equivocal way that no boy could connect such action with life in a world not officially at war. The American experience in Vietnam served... to clinch the lessons begun in the poems of Wilfred Owen.

This book does not confine itself to the fiction of masculine heroism, though I think it is in this area that its excellences come out to their best advantage. He writes rather less well on the feminine counterparts, the ideal stereotypes of girlhood or womanhood, though he has many good things to say about individual novels written for or about girls. Throughout his discussions of the varied genres of children's fiction (historical romance, stories of magic, experiments with time, as well as tales in the more customary settings of childhood) he exhibits the same respect for children, the same breadth of sympathy, the same ability to move with discrimination and

without misplaced censoriousness between the subliterary achievements of popular culture and the great masterpieces.

The book contains a few prosy complacencies, most of them revolving around the figure of "the greatest teacher of English the English universities have ever known", under whom Ingis studied and who, like Jehovah, is much revered but seldom named. Ingis begins his book with words which connoisseurs will recognize as a resounding replay of His Master's Voice: "The great children's novelists are...". Six names follow, as against the original grown-up version's four, but then, as one of Ingis's chapters announces, his is "The Lesser Great Tradition" and allowance should be made for the desire to make up in numbers what was felt to be a little short on weight. He shares some of the Master's urgency of concern about popular culture, and something of his gift for acute and memorable exposure of its falsities. His complaint about how the words "style" and "life" have been debased in the cant-phrase "lifestyle", and his distinction between "values" and "class values", are eloquent pieces of social thinking. But Ingis is conspicuously less censorious about many aspects of our culture than his teacher would have been. This is not because he is more uncritical, I think, but because his mind is independent. This is a strong, awkward and generous book.

## Forbidden friends

By Ann Thwaite

GINA WILSON:  
A Friendship of Equals  
Faber, £4.50.  
0 571 11632 9

BETSY BYARS:  
The Cybil War  
Bodley Head, £3.50.  
0 370 30426 8

TIM KENNEMORE:  
The Middle of the Sandwich  
Faber, £4.25.  
0 571 116787

These three new novels - two English and one American - make for interesting comparisons. All three books are about the problems of friendship, the relationships between children at that age when friends (the sociologists' "peer group") are more important than anything else. The two English stories both have a good deal to do with class, one overtly and one, more effectively, not. The American story is a sort of cadet edition of the eternal triangle.

Gina Wilson's first novel, *Cora Ravenwing*, which was widely praised, was on the same theme. That was a story in the first person, as by an adult looking back to her childhood "all those years ago". The new book, with its rather dreary title *A Friendship of Equals*, seems similarly old-fashioned and might have worked better if it had been similarly distanced. As it is, it seems to be a contemporary story - Louisa moves from a Middle School to a Comprehensive - but the talk, the language, the whole ethos of the book, none of them ring true. The character of the forbidden friend this time the rich "cripple" Stella Boncastle - is a shadowy composite of Cora Ravenwing, and the menacing figure of Agnes Love, the counterpart of Mrs Briggs, is melodramatic and unconvincing.

The other two books, Betsy Byars's *The Cybil War* and Tim Kennemore's *The Middle of the Sandwich*, are both set firmly in the real world of today. Indeed some of the contemporary references may become incomprehensible in a few years' time (images already passing of Donny Osmond, Kermit, *Star Wars*, punk, even a "mini-Watergate"). In *The Cybil War* two fifth-grade friends, Tony Angotti and Simon Newton, see themselves as rivals for the approval of Cybil Ackerman. "Their friendship had been sealed in second grade when the entire class was asked to write essays on their fathers" and neither of them had fathers to write about. Three years

later the friendship has become a habit and Simon has to concentrate hard on the good things about Tony Angotti. Life is more complicated: "Fathers desert you, friends lie about you, teachers humiliate you - and those are supposed to be the good guys".

Betsy Byars has always had a marvellously sure mixture of humour and deep feeling. *The Cybil War* is a slicker, easier, lighter book than, for instance, *The Midnight Fox* or *The Cartoonist*, but the feeling is still there. The opening scene, with Miss McFawn trying to cast a "nutrition play", is pure comedy. ("Simon can be Mr Indigestion." "Tony I specially want you to be the dick pickle.") But the war over Cybil Ackerman has pain and tension as well as laughs. The love quiz, the pet show, the saddest scene, all contribute to a story that moves quickly to the final scene where Simon admits to Cybil that he doesn't know how to pump up bike tyres with the air hose at the gas station. "Aruptly he abandoned his pose as the triumphant general. After all, the war was over. This was the real world and he better learn how it worked. He knelt beside her and watched."

*The Middle of the Sandwich*, at least for many English readers, will be an even more satisfying school story than *The Cybil War*. It is a richer, deeper slice of life. For her final term as a junior, Helen has come to live with her aunt, who teaches in a village school. Her mother is having an operation and convalescing. Helen is familiar with the village but only as a visitor, a holidaymaker. Now she has to try to

## Tellyspeak

IAN STRACHAN:  
Mosses Beech  
Oxford, £5.25.  
0 19 271451 1

This book does some of the right things, some of them in the wrong way. "Right", that is, by the liberal middle-class standards which still vaguely govern the empire of children's literature. Young Peter escapes from a council flat, where telly, pop music and incessant rows between scrounging father and bingo-addicted mother make silence unknown, and takes shelter with an old man in a Pennine cottage; here he discovers the pleasures of hearing flat, where work, learns the pattern of the seasons and sleeps with a farmer's daughter. This run of good fortune in the Welfare State reaches the cottage; but, despite the old man's resulting suicide, there is a hopeful ending.

Peter tells us his own story without

belong. It is not easy - first of all to adjust to her casual, relaxed aunt (and the discovery that she prefers her to her own mother) and then to fit in to the established group at school. The good jacket picture for the book by Margery Gill shows the child as an outsider, alone in the playground. (That fine artist has also done the jacket for *A Friendship of Equals*, but it looks a little too much like a cheerful advertisement for the Year of the Disabled.)

The striking thing about Ms Kennemore's first novel is her assured handling of an adult in the context of a children's story, a rarer feat than one would suppose. She not only depicts Jess, the aunt, with vivid exactitude (I would only demur at the suggestion that she reads the *Telegraph* rather than the *Guardian*) but shows, with no sentimentality whatsoever, how possible it is for children and adults to be friends.

The peculiar nastiness one child can show to another culminates in a splendid scene where Helen pours paint all over the particularly loathsome Joanne Barclay. Jess's reaction is: "Well, you awful child, next time you do something like this, let me know first. Then we can all come and watch." This was not pre-Borstal talk; Helen blinked in confusion. Under the circumstances, Mrs Barclay has decided not to press charges, which means you're not actually to be flogged, just given a telling off." Helen finds a lot of Jess's behaviour unpredictable. There is indeed nothing predictable about the book at all. It is fresh and individual and very well written.

authorial intervention, recording his journey from folly to wisdom. The trouble is that his language has not made the same journey. Tellyspeak relentlessly applied becomes the language of the author, and by its nature it cannot record individual experience. One small symptom: "who's" for "whose" cannot be Peter's fault; once it might be the printers, but three times it must be the author's. Similarly, the author is responsible for dead metaphors and oversimplifications; it is no excuse that Peter has heard such things on television. The distinction between author and narrator, and between Peter as he was and Peter as he has become, ought to be crucial. Yet Ian Strachan seems unaware of them; he could do with a crash course in *Great Expectations* and the art of first-person narrative. Fiction is made of words. *Mosses Beech* is readable and its plot quite ingenious, but its language comes from - and feeds - the very culture which it seeks to oppose and expose.

Dominic Hibberd

## Dido lives

By Brian Baumfield

JOAN AIKEN:  
The Stolen Lake  
Cape, £5.50.  
0 224 01924 4

Devoles of Joan Aiken will be delighted to learn that *The Stolen Lake* recounts the further adventures of the remarkable Dido Twite who first made her appearance in *Black Hearts in Battersea*. Newcomers can however read this story independently.

The tale abounds with incredible happenings as Dido finds herself accompanying the upright Captain Hughes on his ship; making for England by way of the east coast of Roman America. (Regular readers will be aware that the Hanoverian succession to the English throne never occurred and good King James III is monarch.) The Captain receives an urgent message bidding him wait upon the Queen of New Cumbria, an ally who has appealed for help from England because someone has stolen her lake - frozen into ice blocks.

Dido, a pert cockney sparrow, who is by turn cheeky, comic, shrewish, but above all resourceful, returns ashore with her protector, Mr Holystone, the captain's steward. But hardly have two chapters passed before she has been abducted by Mesdames Morgan and Vainsour, seamstresses extraordinary. The strange country where they have embarked has more than its fair share of villains, not least the Queen herself. Queen Ginevra is a fat, repellent lady of very dubious vintage, equipped with two-way mirrored glasses (Guinevere would surely turn in her grave by this parody). She only rouses herself from a state of torpor by the mention of her long lost husband, none other than King Arthur of legendary fame, who is due to make a return appearance after 1,300 years, and for whom the Queen waits.

The machinations by which the stolen lake is returned, a lost princess rescued, with the help of Dr Johnson's dictionary, a rightful king restored, and various villains dispatched to suitably horrific ends, make for exciting reading. Dido, a born survivor enhances her reputation still further, and assuredly we have not heard the last of one of

Joan Aiken's most original creations. The characters live - from the liquor-loving Mr Brandywine (the British Agent in New Cumbria, whose fingers are paralysed by a spell) the aloof Captain Hughes, Master of the Thrush in which Dido is a passenger, the too-good-to-be-true Mr Holystone (who turns out to be King Arthur, reborn) to Dido herself. Not to mention Mr Bran, whose magical powers identify him irrevocably as Merlin the magician, though this is never actually mentioned.

None of this author's stories are ever dull. She is one of the most imaginative and consistently entertaining writers - especially for the nine to thirteen age group, or, indeed, any children for grown-ups (for that matter). Her capacity for creating interesting, idiosyncratic characters, strong plots and adventurous situations seems boundless. It is perhaps slightly churlish to suggest that it is in the lack of bounds there lies a weakness. There is almost a superabundance of talent - too much for any one story. The wealth of detail, of literary allusions, of Cockney slang and foreign phrases - not to mention the distinctive Aikenish invention of language - prevent a difficult hurdle for young readers.

The fates and fortunes become at times so outrageous that they can seem absurd.

For example, in *The Stolen Lake* young girls are kidnapped, then sacrificed by being hurled into the lake where they are devoured by piscadores - man-eating fishes - and their skeletons are retrieved and ground into paste which is subsequently eaten by Queen Ginevra in order to maintain her immortality. This fearfully wicked woman lives and perishes in a rotating palace, with a fiendish revolving door - and so on. For good measure, the country abounds in Aurores (cousins of the pterodactyl) and other dreadful, bloodthirsty creatures. The deliberate alteration of history seems not particularly significant, since few children of this age are specially knowledgeable or very concerned as to which monarch follows whom and when.

In her earlier, and arguably most successful book, *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase*, these excesses have been kept in control and a firm control exercised over characters and situations. The reins have been loosened perhaps a little too much in this story; nevertheless it remains an original and splendid entertainment.

## Pupil power

JAN MARK:  
Hairs in the Palm of the Hand  
Kestrel, £4.25.  
0 7226 57285

Children will certainly recognize the reference in the title to the old schoolboy joke about detecting the first signs of madness (the second sign, of course, being to look for them). On this tongue-in-cheek note, Jan Mark presents us with two splendid short stories, both with school settings, and demonstrates once again her skill as a storyteller.

It is not easy to capture aspects of a world with which children are so familiar but Jan Mark has a wonderful eye for just the right detail and a real feeling for character and narrative which she uses very effectively here in two horribly realistic and hilariously funny pictures of school life. She manages to view the world of the school with a sympathetic understanding for both teachers and pupils, whilst using all her wit and ingenuity to show the real essence of life at school: the boredom, the humour, the constant struggle for power within and between both staff and pupils and particularly, the thin line between organization and chaos. It is chaos that reigns in these two stories.

The first story, "Time and the Hour" is set in a boys' school where one small boy has been keeping a private tally of exactly how much time is gained and wasted by his form, each school day. The class

"leader" discovers the system and persuades the whole class to bet on the following week's loss or gain. This opens the way for absolute chaos in class 1x as various members of the form ingeniously attempt to gain or lose time. The details of this amusing idea are cleverly reported down to the last second and the schoolmaster's timely intervention at the end is handled in a masterly fashion.

"Chutzpah" is set in a large comprehensive school on the first day of term. Eileen, a lively, precocious girl, dressed in bomber jacket, jeans, and West Ham ted-shirt, against school regulations, spends the day apparently looking for her new form. In fact, she uses her considerable talents to cause as much disruption and dissent as possible, in the interests of democracy and women's rights. How easily she manages to survive a day without ever entering a classroom, makes amusing reading.

These are two memorable short stories, very much in the vein of *Thunder and Lightning*. The stories are longer than those in Jan Mark's earlier collection *Nothing to be Afraid of* and this seems to allow her a greater freedom to develop her skills, while remaining within the confines of the short story. Certainly, the stories compare very favourably with the best of *Nothing to be Afraid of*. Children of ten and over (and many adults) will find much in *Hairs in the Palm of the Hand* to identify with and laugh at.

Judith Eldon

## Inventing for fun

By Nicholas Tucker

ROALD DAHL:  
George's Marvellous Medicine  
Illustrated by Quentin Blake  
Cape, £3.95.  
0 224 01901 5

CAROLYN SLOAN:  
Further Inventions of Mr Cogge  
Illustrated by Glenys Ambrus  
Methuen, £4.95.  
0 333 31125 6

For some time now Roald Dahl has been the most popular living novelist that we have for children, despite, or sometimes possibly because of, lapses in taste that have not always found equal favour among adult readers. His latest offering, *George's Marvellous Medicine*, is a good example of this ability he has to entertain the young often at the cost of offending many of the other sort. It is about a small boy who declares war against his disagreeable grandmother, described variously as "a skinny old hag" or a "grizzly old gramin" with "a small, puckered mouth like a dog's bottom".

Such a picture may well reflect quite graphically small children's occasional resentment of the elderly, plain and frequently querulous. Yet since the days of Dickens and W. S. Gilbert, and their pitiless humour at the expense of old age, it has been customary, especially in children's books, not to encourage such attitudes. Instead, there have been reams of admittedly often rather anodyne books about witches who are merely lonely or misunderstood rather than evil, and of grumpy old ladies still survive in other stories, they are usually portrayed with compassion rather than cruelty. Not Mr Dahl, however: not only does his young hero George think murderous thoughts about his grandmother right through to the end, he also actually administers some "medicine" to her made up from the bathroom (nail varnish), the kitchen (shoe polish) and the garden shed (antifreeze and engine oil).

At this point, what could seem like a blue-print for a new type of granny-bashing turns into outright fantasy, with the old lady first floating like a balloon and then growing as high as a crane - an effect well caught by Quentin Blake's illustrations. In fact, I am sure that most children will read the whole of this otherwise lively and inventive story as something purely fantastic, and old ladies still sheltering

in household corners will probably be quite safe to stay where they are, rather than make for the nearest Old People's home double quick. And yet, as with the marvellous medicine itself, a slightly nasty taste does persist after consumption, despite much else in the tale that is both fast and funny.

Carolyn Sloan's *Further Inventions of Mr Cogge*, meanwhile, is as opposite a story as one could imagine: witty, detached, whimsical and finally, alas, over-indulgent to the point of dullness. It concerns an inventor whose best friend is a computer, and as such is an electronic up-dating of Norman Hunter's stories about dear old Professor Bramestawm, and his more mechanical aids. By contrast, there is plenty here about "memory banks", "special tapes" and so on, while some of the dialogue is oddly effective. "Why don't you do something to cheer me up?" Mr Cogge punches out at one moment, to receive the computer reply, "I am not programmed to be sympathetic. The to be funny all the time, so that no firm story line ever emerges to help readers along when the humour sometimes flags. But when Carolyn Sloan learns to balance her stories more successfully, she should be a writer worth watching out for.

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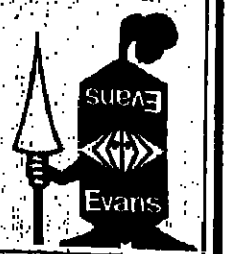
"When I'm happy, said Jafta, I purr like a lioncub..."



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## Artists and writers

### By Kicki Moxon Browne

Not so very long ago, the first completely wordless picture book (Renate Meyer's *Vicki*, 1968) was published, causing some debate as to whether it was really a book at all. Since then many have appeared, with books such as *The Snowman* exploiting the form to perfection. Both *Truck* and *Sunshine* have no text, but are nevertheless eloquent – and would lose much of their impact if accompanied by a story.

The hero of *Truck* is a vast articulated lorry, bright red and decorated on both sides with the word 'TRUCKING' in huge white letters.

We follow the lorry, ironically loaded with tricycles, on its journey through traffic jams, fog and rain, tunnels and spaghetti junctions, forever jostling with other vehicles, assaulted by blaring traffic signs, and belching out black smoke. There is some imaginative play with perspectives – we never see the lorry from the same angle, and sometimes we only see a little corner of it – which gives the pictures movement and immediacy. An urban nightmare maybe, but nevertheless a very enjoyable book, and a worthy sequel to *Freight Train* by the same artist.

*Sunshine* is very different. The setting is entirely domestic. The story, in the form of a strip cartoon, tells us about a little girl, who gets up early in the morning and wakes her father, who gives her breakfast and

then goes back to bed, deeply immersed in the morning paper. The little girl gets herself dressed, and then draws her parents' attention to the time. Chaos ensues, while the parents rush about getting dressed. Finally, everybody has left the house and peace is restored to be enjoyed by the solitary rag doll. The title, incidentally, refers to actual sunshine, which underlines the unfolding of the story, growing from a little patch until it finally explodes into white light as the parents leap out of bed. It is a likeable story, full of warmly humorous sequences, such as the girl dressing herself – you can see from the way she is standing that all her clothes are twisted and probably half of them back to front, and that her shoes are on the wrong foot. To me the only false note among the otherwise well observed drawings is the girl picking up the alarm clock with a stereotyped expression of surprise – I wonder whether such a small child would really react so strongly to the time, particularly as the clock has notches rather than numbers on its face.

The picture books this season have their usual share of traditional tales with new illustrations. There are two new books from Tomie de Paola, *Old Mother Hubbard* and *her Dog* and *Fin McCool*. *Old Mother Hubbard* is set out as a stage play, watched by characters from nursery rhymes. The first picture shows the curtain, bearing the credits, the last Mother Hubbard and her dog taking a curtain call, one bedecked with flowers, the other clutching a bone

and seventeen with the next. Apart from this, it is a nice book, the stylized drawings aglow with subtle shades of colour ranging from candy pastel to richly luminous, and the translation is sprinkled with pleasingly obscure turns of phrase. David Cox's illustrations of his story, *Miss Bunkle's Umbrella*, are unusually restrained; in fact they look quite severe at first sight in black and white with the occasional splash of yellow. But the story about an elderly school-teacher and her exotic adventure in Java is so satisfying, as well as illustrated, the story of *Fin McCool* in which it is Fin's wife Oonagh who tricks the dreaded giant and saves her panicking husband. (Lady heroines in folk tales are rare enough to deserve a special mention.) An artist who is also a writer ensures a well balanced picture book. Throughout *Fin McCool*, there is one picture to a sequence, and roughly the same amount of words to every picture, which is a help to children just starting to read, and to the child who looks at the pictures while listening to the story. The language is simple, yet with a touch of traditional grandeur about it, and the text is conveniently set out with one phrase to a line for easy reading.

Close co-operation between writer and artist appears to be lacking in *The Bremen Town Musicians*, and on closer examination, the present translation and the illustrations seem to be separated by ten years. It is irritating, particularly for the non-reading recipient of the story, to have two lines of text with one pic-

ture and seventeen with the next. Apart from this, it is a nice book, the stylized drawings aglow with subtle shades of colour ranging from candy pastel to richly luminous, and the translation is sprinkled with pleasingly obscure turns of phrase. David Cox's illustrations of his story, *Miss Bunkle's Umbrella*, are unusually restrained; in fact they look quite severe at first sight in black and white with the occasional splash of yellow. But the story about an elderly school-teacher and her exotic adventure in Java is so satisfying, as well as illustrated, the story of *Fin McCool* in which it is Fin's wife Oonagh who tricks the dreaded giant and saves her panicking husband. (Lady heroines in folk tales are rare enough to deserve a special mention.) An artist who is also a writer ensures a well balanced picture book. Throughout *Fin McCool*, there is one picture to a sequence, and roughly the same amount of words to every picture, which is a help to children just starting to read, and to the child who looks at the pictures while listening to the story. The language is simple, yet with a touch of traditional grandeur about it, and the text is conveniently set out with one phrase to a line for easy reading.

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## The indestructible word

### By Lucy Micklethwait

Today's proud parent is inclined to provide his child with a library within months of birth. The baby, on the whole, does not object to this, though his interests are far from literary. A book, like any other toy, is first tested in the mouth and given a good gumming. The older infant finds satisfaction in sinking his tooth into the book's spine, which can then be pulled off in small pieces. Turning pages back and forth is poor sport compared with tearing them out. It is, therefore, a mistake to allow babies to enjoy without supervision books that they will want to read a year or two later, when child and parent alike will be irritated to find pages torn, scrawled on with felt-tip pen or stuck together with mashed banana. On the other hand, children cannot be supervised all the time and when they are too young to have learnt respect for books, they must be supplied either with disposable books from jumble sales or with something indestructible.

The idea of indestructible books is not new, though the reason for them initially was not the destructiveness of babies but the expense of paper. In the beginning there was the horn-

book – a paddle-shaped piece of wood to which was attached a lesson-sheet, covered by a layer of melted horn. This was superseded by the battledore which was a printed sheet of cardboard folded three times, and often varnished to make it washable. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, value for money lay in the printers and pocket books that were pouring from the presses, and the battledore disappeared. A few sheets of card could not be considered a good investment when twenty of paper could be had for the same price.

Today we have board books for babies which are as unexpensive as the battledore. Those that are viewed here cost between 95p and £1.25 and consist of five to seven double-page spreads.

Valerie Greeley's books are the most expensive, perhaps because much care has been taken over the picture. Her animals are painstakingly painted in their various and detailed habitats and, with the exception of a lion which any taxidermist would consider a failure, they are reasonably life-like.

Helen Oxenbury has chosen a delightfully jump-frolic baby as the subject of her set of five books, *Dressing*, *Playing*, *Family*, *Friends* and *Working* (incidents in everyday life). He (I say "he" but one cannot

tell) is seen enthralled by a real book (held upside down), and fast asleep on a long-suffering marmalade cat, bemused on the pot, and tucking fearfully into a bowl of green sludge. Each item, person or animal is shown on the left-hand page alone and on the right-hand page in association with the hero. With a glint in her eye, Helen Oxenbury has captured masterfully the expressions and postures of early childhood. This is certainly the series most likely to appeal to adults, but I am not sure that the infant reader will find enough in them to hold his attention for long. Once past the stage at which any picture is merely a set of abstract shapes and colours, children like pictures in which there is a lot going on, and here there is not.

The four books by Jean and Gareth Adamson are the only ones with any text, which is hardly necessary in books of this sort. They describe some fairly banal events in the lives of Topsy and Tim, who go to playschool, have a birthday party,

acquire a kitten and visit the countryside. Some of the background pictures are painted with a pleasing childish fluency, and one suspects by a different hand from that which portrayed Topsy and Tim, stylized in the 1960s manner of an Eastern European comic, with triangular mouths and an old-fashioned assortment of clothes. Children, however, have not sufficient discrimination to realize how unattractive Topsy and Tim are, and will find more going on in these pictures than in any of the others.

It may seem then that the jumble sale is better value than the board book, in which the bulk and expense of the board leaves very little over for the book. There is room for improvement, with a clear need for more imaginative art-work, but it may already be too late. Rumour has it that a new generation of indestructible books made entirely of plastic is on its way across the Atlantic – books which may change the face of British bathtime.

VALERIE GREELLY: *Farm Animals* (0 216 90981 3), *Field Animals* (0 216 90980 5), *Pets* (0 216 90982 1), *Zoo Animals* (0 216 90983 X), *Blackie*, £1.25 each.

HELEN OXENBURY: *Family* (0 416 05690 3), *Friends* (0 416 05680 5), *Playing* (0 416 05610 5), *Working* (0

416 05630 X), *Methuen*, 99p each.

JEAN AND GARETH ADAMSON: *Topsy and Tim go to Playschool* (0 216 91090 0), *Topsy and Tim's Birthday* (0 216 91120 6), *Topsy and Tim's Country Day* (0 216 91119 2), *Topsy and Tim's New Pet* (0 216 91091 9), *Blackie*, 95p each.

which describes an American school trip to a farm and which has no message at all, but is just a great fill-billy romp. Most children enjoy slap-stick comedy, and here is a veritable orgy of pigs getting into a bus and eating all the other with corn and eggs, and of course the bus constrictor eating all the laundry. I have no doubt that a great many children will love the book, but it left me with a rather uneasy feeling. It seemed to be deliberately ingratiating, like giving mountains of sweets to a child, and hoping for the best.

Animal stories are always well represented in children's picture books. *The Lonely Rhinoceros* is a nicely conceived if somewhat stodgy story of animals borrowing pieces of each other's skin. It is really the Rossettesque/primitive pictures with a multitude of detail that make the book stand up to constant re-reading.

Adelina Schlime introduces us to a family of snails living in a slummy-looking cabbage patch, all dank vegetation, broken household objects and stagnant water with flies. (The story is appropriately dedicated to Patricia Highsmith.) Delightfully repulsive pictures abound, as the snails wobble about their business, leaving ample trails of slime behind them.

Finally, a new edition of the Edwardian ballad *The Highwayman* with illustrations by Charles Keating. It is a beautiful book, but it is undeniably blood-thirsty, with Keating in his most uncompromising mood. The elements of violence would probably make the book rather disturbing for most children under, say, nine or ten, but it might slot rather well into the awkward gap that still exists between children's and adult literature.

At the opposite end of the scale, *The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Washing*,

DONALD CREWS: *Truck*, Bodley Head, £3.50, 0 370 30396 2.

JAN ORMEROD: *Sunshine*, Kestrel Books, £3.95, 0 7226 5736 6.

TOMIE DE PAOLA: *Old Mother Hubbard and her Dog*, Methuen, £3.95, 0 416 21350 2.

TOMIE DE PAOLA: *Fin McCool*, Andersen Press, £3.95, 0 86264 000 8.

THE BROTHERS GRIMM: *The Bremen Town Musicians*, illustrated by Janina Domanska, Julia MacRae Books, £4.25, 0 86203 063 3.

DAVID COX: *Miss Bunkle's Umbrella*, Aurora Press, £3.25, 0 86748 004 1.

LIBBY HATHORN: *Lachlan's Walk*, illustrated by Sandra Laroche, Methuen, £3.50, 0 454 00206.

TRINKA HAKES NOBLE: *The Day Jimmy's Boa Ate the Washing*, illustrated by Stephen Kellogg, Hutchinson, £3.50, 0 09 144180 3.

PATRICK BARTHELEME: *The Lonely Rhinoceros*, illustrated by Marie-Hélène Manhes, Oxford University Press, £3.95, 0 19 179754 9.

TATIANA HAUPTMANN: *Adelina Schlime*, Benn, £3.95, 0 510 00105 X.

ALFRED NOYES: *The Highwayman*, illustrated by Charles Keating, Oxford University Press, £4.50, 0 19 279748 4.

## The morality of the menagerie

### By Ann Martin

Few books achieve the classic standard of using the animals' own habits and behaviour to shape and develop the plot. But animals certainly continue to be favoured by publishers: in this selection of picture books nine out of thirteen feature animals, and undoubtedly a simple story often seems to be enhanced by their use as protagonists – perhaps, too, a moral tale is made more palatable by being enacted by woolly toys or cosy wild beasts, while illustrators have a lot more scope for their imagination than if they were confined to human shapes.

*Mrs Pig's Bulk Buy* is a charming example. Ten little pigs are somehow more engaging than ten little children to draw; the incongruity of their expressions point the humour in this fable of gluttony. They snout everything with tomato ketchup; so, for a whole day, Mrs Pig feeds them nothing else. The lesson is learnt, harmony is restored. Not altogether an original idea, but well told and delightfully illustrated.

With both text and pictures *Little Spring* successfully teaches a little about turtles and springtime. Ten little turtles panic at the sight of a bump in the ground: the idea that it might be a

bomb rather than a monster sounds a disturbingly modern note. However it is only ten more baby turtles who finally emerge. The story is full of amusing touches which help to overcome any trace of cynicism. The same is true for *George and Martha One Fine Day*. There is no good reason why two hippopotamuses behaving like a small boy and girl should be comic, but it is so; there is a Bahar-like quality to the incongruity of these short tales of the tricks the two play on one another, with Martha always having the last word.

Where can an elephant hide? on the other hand, does attempt to use animals in their context. It is just because he is an elephant that Morris finds it difficult to hide from the hunters, try as he may to copy other animals' habits. Again there is a nice humour in Morris's eventual hiding place – in the river, with a bird sitting on his trunk.

The story in *Cuthbert and the Good Ship Thingamabob* is slight, an excuse for the exuberant pictures of Cuthbert the dog and his oddly-shaped friends as they go adventuring beneath the sea. There is a lot of detail and pretty colour in the illustrations for a child to enjoy. Another oddity with considerable appeal, definitely enhanced by drawings instead of children, is *Elsworth and the Cats from Mars*. Elsworth forays into space with the help of

visiting Martian cats. The witty illustrations and the comic-strip layout, combined with space travel, an idea which seems to fascinate most small children, could make this a favourite book.

The books described so far have quite a lot of text in them, which needs to be read for full enjoyment. In the next three the words are minimal, and not important. *Ready, Steady Go!* pictures a small bear's obstacle race. The simple, clear drawings are appealing and good for the very young. *Feeding Babies* is also a first stage book. Bright pictures and easy words describe how various animals suckle their young, ending with a human mother and child: useful for a nursery school, perhaps. The allegorical *Boy with the Umbrella*, spreading happiness with flowers along his path, has words only at beginning and end. Here are clear narrative pictures with scope for parent and child imaginings.

An Alphabet book with a difference which would appeal to the youngest but also be much enjoyed by older children is *On Market Street*. A little boy goes shopping: each letter is then represented by a figure composed entirely of the items bought, from apples to doughnuts, noodles and wigs, to mention but a few of this idiosyncratic and delightful list. This is a book which should give hours of pleasure. It

is worth buying, not just borrowing from the library.

*Oliver Button is a Sissy* is well told and amusingly drawn. Oliver does not like games, so his understanding mother pays for dancing lessons and he enters a local competition (which he does not win – a good touch). After this everyone thinks better of him. Apart from a personal antipathy to the word "sissy", this is a worthy little book, good for library shelves.

More difficult to assess is *Zooey and Hazel*. Perhaps it could best be described as in the style of *Catcher in the Rye*; a rambling story of two girls and

their imaginary adventures with a monster in the fields and woods near home. The monster is good, the writing a bit too self-conscious and overlong for the seven-year-olds at which it must be aimed.

Finally, brought all the way from Australia – and one does rather wonder why – *Harce and Badger go to Town* is concerned with pollution. Hiding from the crop-spraying aeroplane, they dream of journeying to a city where animals try to adapt to life underground. But reformation, not adaptation, is the answer. A fashionable message, ponderously told. Others do it better.

MARY RAYNER: *Mrs Pig's Bulk Buy*, Macmillan, £3.95, 0 333 30978 2.

LILLIAN HUBBARD: *Twelve Spring*, World's Work, £2.95, 0 437 44691 4.

JAMES MARSHALL: *George and Martha One Fine Day*, Kestrel, £3.95, 0 7226 5733 3.

DAVID MCPHAIL: *Where Can an Elephant Hide?*, André Deutsch, £3.50, 0 233 97349 4.

KIM CHISHOLM: *Cuthbert and the Good Ship Thingamabob*, illustrated by Yasuko Kimura, Evans, £3.95, 0 237 45564 1.

PATIENCE BREWSTER: *Elsworth and the Cats from Mars*, Hutchinson, £3.95, 0 09 144800 X.

SHIGEO WATANABE: *Ready, Steady, Go!* illustrated by Yasuo Ohtomo, Bodley Head, £3.95, 0 370 30406 3.

CHUYOKO NAKATANI: *Feeding Babies*, Bodley Head, £2.95, 0 370 30401 7.

CAMME SOLE VENTURELLI: *The Boy with the Umbrella*, Blackie, £3.95, 0 216 91086 2.

ARNOLD LOBEL: *On Market Street*, illustrated by Anita Lobel, Ernest Benn, £3.95, 0 510 00118 1.

TOMIE DE PAOLA: *Oliver Button is a Sissy*, Methuen, £2.50, 0 416 89650 2.

GILL BOND and CHRIS AUSTIN: *Zooey and Hazel*, illustrated by Gill Bond, Hamish Hamilton, £4.25, 0 241 10589 7.

NAOMI LEWIS and TONY ROSS: *Harce and Badger go to Town*, Andersen Press, £2.95, 0 9134 7894 U.

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1 Insubstantial I can fill lives.  
Cathedrals, worlds.  
I can haunt islands,  
Raise passions  
Or calm the madness of kings.  
I've even fed the affectionate.  
I can't be touched or seen,  
But I can be noted.

2 We are a crystal zoo,  
Wielders of fortunes,  
The top of our professions.  
Like hard silver nails  
Hammered into the dark  
We make charts for mariners.

3 I reveal your secrets.  
I am your morning enemy,  
Though I give reassurance of presence.  
I can be magic,  
Or the judge in beauty contests.  
Count Dracula has no use for me.  
When you leave  
I am left to my own reflections.

Answers: 1 Music; 2 Stars; 3 Mirror; 4 Bubbles; 5 Ring; 6 Mist.

## Totleigh Riddles

4 My tensions and pressures  
Are precise if transitory.  
Iridescent, I can float  
And catch small rainbows.  
Beautiful luxuries in me.  
I can inhabit ovens  
Or sparkle in bottles.  
I am filled with that  
Which surrounds me.

5 Containing nothing  
I can blind people for ever,  
Or just hold a finger.  
Without end or beginning  
I go on to appear in fields,  
Ensnare enemies,  
Or in another guise  
Carry in the air  
Messages from tower to tower.

6 Silent I invade cities,  
Blur edges, confuse travellers,  
My thumb smudging the light.  
I drift from rivers  
To loiter in early morning fields,  
Until Constable Sun  
Moves me on.

John Cotton



## The stuff of fiction

By Cara Chanteau

GILLIAN CROSS:  
*A Whisper of Lace*  
Oxford University Press. £4.50.  
0 19 271447 3

SUSAN PRICE:  
*Christopher Uptake*  
Faber. £4.75.  
0 571 11680 4

It is difficult to write a good historical novel. To do so requires delicacy of touch if the reader is to avoid that tiresome feeling of being improved, or the equally unflattering suspicion that the author will trust him to understand only those points underlined three times. This is strongly borne out in these two children's historical novels.

The first of these, *A Whisper of Lace*, is not as the title might suggest romantic as well as historical, although it must be said that the heroine does have "over-heated brown eyes" and a "mobile mouth". In fact it is a diabolic tale of contraband, ruthless blackmail and escape. The young crippled Daniel and his tomboyish sister, Selma, had always played at being pirates. On the return of one of their elder brothers, the cool, mocking Francis, Selma who is bored and impatient with her life becomes involved in a glamorous real-life smuggling adventure. Only Daniel and his new friend, the sensible servant girl Betty, realize the genuine danger of the escape, and to them falls the task of saving the day.

## Into the sub-culture

BERNARD ASHLEY:  
*Dodgem*  
Julia MacRae Books. £5.25.  
0 86203 048 X

I'm Trying to Tell You  
Kestrel. £3.75.  
0 7226 5725 0

We all know, theoretically, that children operate in a sub-culture with its own rules, fears and brutalities. Bernard Ashley's distinctive quality as a writer has always been his ability to enter into that sub-culture, convincingly and unselfishly. Because the adults in his books—quite realistically—do not share that ability, his heroes have often been victims, triumphing ultimately in spite of their own weaknesses.

Simon however, in *Dodgem*, is refreshingly stalwart. Although he is bullied at school and taken into care by well-meaning, uncomprehending social workers, he is sensible and stable, taking care of his father, Alex, a painter and sign-writer who has plunged into a deep and silent depression after killing his flighty wife in a car accident.

When he is taken into care, Simon meets Rose, a hard-bitten, self-sufficient girl of his own age. She and her uncle, who owns a battered fair-ground ride, arrange for the escape of Simon and his father, so that they can trade on Alex's skills as a painter to assure their chance of being booked for a fair. In this free and easy fairground

The plot is kept moving, but the characters seem to be chosen from a manual of stereotypes, and the inevitable pointers — "unfashionably" flushed cheeks, the "fastidiously" taken pinch of snuff — live only within the safe confines of the cliché.

It is with a book like Susan Price's *Christopher Uptake* that one appreciates just how successful the genre can be. Without the standard family conflicts, misdirected inheritances, or women rustling about in any significant way, the story-line is refreshingly original.

Christopher Uptake, the sixteenth-century protagonist, is a clever joiner's son who wins a scholarship to university, but finds that he is far more inspired by the idea of drama than play-writing. When expelled for such activities, he escapes a living by his writing. Through his own efforts, he is unwillingly involved in a spy ring to expose subversive Catholics. Forced by the inhuman Bagthorpe, into spying on his own patron, Edmund Brentwood, Christopher gradually discovers that he has been enmeshed in a terrifying world of intrigue and double loyalties.

Although the story is dramatic, the portrayal of the misfit Christopher is achieved with a degree of sensitivity and sophistication that makes for a realistic and readable novel. The Elizabethan university town is convincingly described without the customary revelling in the insular arrangements of the time. Any necessary historical information is given unselfishly. It should appeal to all teenagers who dislike being bludgeoned, but who enjoy an element of suspense and a character who is easy to identify with, at odds with the world.

atmosphere, Alex is able to relax a little and start pointing again, while Simon is at last free to investigate the true circumstances of his mother's death. Though his relationship with Rose, he comes to understand that his mother was not the blameless, idealized figure he had made of her.

It is a fast-moving story, sustaining its suspense until the rather abrupt ending. But what makes it remarkable is the sensitive delineation of relationships and atmosphere. The school Simon hates and the uneasy mood of the home where he is taken into care across with the precision of reality, and Simon's protective but uncertain attitude to his father is subtly presented.

The strength of *Dodgem* is underlined when one reads *I'm Trying to Tell You*, another new book by Bernard Ashley, for younger readers. Here, in what is in effect a collection of short stories, he presents four pieces, of writing ostensibly done by four different children. In one, a West Indian girl describes a family wedding which was important to her, but which will not make an "exciting story" for her teacher. In another, a girl writes home from a school journey. Her stilted, conventional letter to her parents is broken up by the more honest comments she makes in her letter to her friend. All four stories are elegantly written, with a good grasp of dialogue, but the incidents they describe are largely trivial. The book is very short, and its ironic humour will appeal mainly to adults. Children are likely to find it more of a nuisance than a pleasure.

Gillian Cross

## As awareness grows

By Sarah Hayes

PETER DICKINSON:  
*The Seventh Raven*  
Gollancz. £4.95.  
0 575 02960 9

Young people are traditionally held to spend much time and energy sitting up late at night setting the world to rights. In fact most teenagers are concerned exclusively with specifics — with friends, clothes, sports, music, or whatever is currently turning them on. Global awareness comes, if at all, with adulthood.

The *Seventh Raven* is narrated by a seventeen-year-old girl, a participant in a real-life drama which draws her aside from immediate preoccupations and briefly offers her a new and wider perspective — one in which right and wrong are not clearly defined, and the nature of art, commitment and loyalty are called into question. Peter Dickinson has always been fascinated by the motive power of faith, which can work in his view either for good or evil. His new novel contains his most overt discussion of the subject to date.

It is necessary to start with the philosophical basis for this story, because that is the book's raison d'être. It is also necessary to get it out of the way quickly since, in the words of one of the characters, "good messages make bad music". The dialogue between art and commitment, between freedom and liberation, might have been earnest and tedious in the hands of a less able writer. Couched as it is in the language of an articulate teenager, the discussion is never boring, merely a little

contrived: messages make the music too good to be true.

Most people, however, don't bother to listen to the music, and most people will find *The Seventh Raven* a very good read. The wit, the pace, the sympathetic characters — the oddballs — Dickinson hallmarks — are all here. The setting for the book is the annual children's opera mounted by a small semi-professional band of Kensington parents known as the Mafia. Doll Jacobs at seventeen, with eight years of playing owls, slaves, whale-ribs (Jonah), flames (Burning Fiery Furnace), and numerous wicked women behind her, is too old for the opera and manages to infiltrate the organizing Mafia. Her descriptions of casting a hundred children as priests of Baal, tribesmen, warriors, hand-maidens and hulk that can be chopped up on stage, is horribly funny. And all too recognizable to anyone involved in drama and children is the account of the first rehearsal where the composer makes his work come alive for the children only to be sabotaged by the scripping of Elijah's ravens — the youngest, and loudest, offstage performers.

The pleasure of joint effort, of seeing the work develop, the security of being amongst "our sort" — that is the social/aesthetic elite of Kensington — Westminster and St Pauls — these are the qualities that feed Doll's enthusiasm for the opera and inform the early spirit of the book. The intrusion of violence on to a scene of civilized excitement — the day of the dress rehearsal in the church — comes as a hideous shock.

At first it is a game: Matteen (read Chilean) terrorists burst into the church after some gunfire outside and

imprison the cast in full costume. They are looking for Elijah's seventh raven, nephew of the future president of Matteen, but Juan is already disguised as a handmaiden. As the children are organized and secrets are kept, the terrorists begin to chat and time passes. Then Juan is discovered by the ruthless girl terrorist and the atmosphere changes: the children are frightened, the adults unsure of the situation and the terrorist jumpy. The edginess continues as the terrorists mount a show trial, choosing as their representative criminal the most vulnerable person in the church: Doll's cellist mother, Council for defence, in the person of the costume-designer, an old-guard socialist no longer so sure of the party card she has carried over the years, asks awkward questions. The trial is brought to a sudden end with a sentence of death and a shot. Immediately police rush in, and a relative normality is restored. Doll has been changed however — by the events themselves, by what has been said on both sides, or possibly by no more than the passage of time. Now she is free to go on.

Peter Dickinson has a splendid creation in his narrator. He has totally absorbed her attitudes to other people, her views and especially her language, part schoolgirl (all beasties and actualities), part mature and reflective. His setting, too, and minor characters are bursting with life and humour, and his plot is cunningly set about with surprises and shifts of mood. It has to be said, though, that this is a lesser piece, a work that feels more thought-out than it should. A book that, in the last analysis, lacks that quality of absolute strangeness and wonder that pervades the very best of Peter Dickinson's work.

her equilibrium and her faith in her future. Both girls are beautifully observed characters and readers of eleven and over will readily identify with Nan, not only because of the theatre in her blood but because like herself she is using her knowledge and awareness of other people to discover her own identity. The book seems to lack (ironically enough, considering its authentic stage background) the unerring sense of theatre which we have come to expect from this author, and the marvellously sure and sustained evocation of another age. No book, however, from Barbara Willard is without its own distinction and to have two at a single sitting is cause for rejoicing.

## Times past

GEOFFREY TREASE:  
*A Wood by Moonlight*  
And other stories  
Chatto. £3.95.  
0 7011 2575 6

Geoffrey Trease stands fascinatingly between one world of children's fiction and another amazingly different: the time gap being about fifty years. In the 1930s he was a pioneer opponent of storytelling marked, as he has put it, by ossified ideas and values. "On no account any hint of affection between the sexes," is the sort of advice that a children's writer. The breakthrough into something approaching ordinary amusing human truth is partly due to Mr Trease's imaginative obstinacy. So it's particularly interesting to read a collection of his short stories that stretch across close on forty years.

Seven out of the twelve are historical, and remind me very much of the work of another pioneer: Rhoda Power, who, like Mr Trease, set out to demonstrate that what had come to be thought of as a tomb, the past, had actually been full of live people. Usually the moment chosen for a story, by both writers, was one that brought together the modest childhood and momentous adult activity. So young Ralph happens to be around unassuming in Holland when a conspiracy of old Cavaliers decides to assassinate Cromwell's ambassador. They realize that Ralph has overheard their plot,

and leave him bound and gagged: but a characteristic that Mr Trease shares with his predecessors, a refusal to allow any youngster to remain helplessly tethered, soon ensures that Ralph is on his way to foil the villains. Which he does by skating along the canals — the only way to get there first.

It's history that, within a somewhat obvious frame of story, is made really vivid by the author's delight in the pure rashness of childhood. It's perhaps this last that really makes him a writer for the young. He sees children as essentially mischievous creatures. In a story set in France in the Second World War, the hero is the village schoolmaster whose naughtiness is seen in another light when turned against the Nazis.

Eyes shine, bronzed young men turn up at just the right moment: much of it is the old stuff splendidly in the service of the new. Nowadays it may be done rather more subtly, and the feeling that Mr Trease's stories sometimes give — that history was a perpetual twentieth century — may be studiously excluded. But he is such a good, lively teller of tales — and I suspect many readers may like best those set in the present and near-present — especially "Flit Walah". This story, that sounds close to not being fiction at all, of the way a charming Untouchable in India is provided by a British soldier with his one chance of social advance, is full of perhaps the most important quality Mr Trease all those years ago brought to children's fiction: a genial humane-ness.

Edward Dilsen

## Paperbacks in brief

*One Dragon's Dream* by Peter Pavay (Picture Puffin. £1.00 14 050 359 5) A rhyming, counting dream of a dragon's encounters with two turkeys, three tigers etc. in a mysterious cluttered setting. Ten turtles too him home to bed. Ages 5 to 7.

*A Peaceable Kingdom* by Alice and Martin Provensen (Picture Puffin. £1.25. 0 14 050370 6) 1978. A nineteenth-century alphabet verse originally written for Shaker children which mixes mythical and common animals, mottoes and metres. The illustrations echo the feeling of the original manuscript. Ages 5 to 7.

*The Twelve Dancing Princesses* by Errol Le Cain. (Picture Puffin. 90p 0 14 050322 6) 1979. Elaborate formal pictures complement this re-telling of the Grimms' tale of the soldier who discovers how the king's wonderfully beautiful daughters wear out their shoes each night and thus wins the hand of the eldest princess. Ages 5 to 7.

*Noggin and the Island* (0 00 661707 7) and *Noggin and the Flowers* (0 00 661708 5) by Oliver Postgate and Peter Firmin (Picture Lions. 85p each.) 1969 and 1971. Two stories in the saga of

King Noggin the Nog in the Lands of the North. Noggin, Nooka and Knut battle against Noghda the Bad and win. Ages 5 to 7.

*Odette: A Springtime in Paris* by Kaye Fender and Philippe Dumas. (Gel. Puffin. £1.95. 0 190409 34 4) 1978. Water-colour sketches of Paris illustrate this gentle tale of a baby bird and the old man who looks after her one summer in Paris. Ages 5 to 7.

*The Good Tiger* by Elizabeth Bowen. Illustrated by Quentin Blake. (Magnet. 95p. 0 416 21230 1) 1965. The adventures of the good tiger who is very well behaved and only eats cake when he goes to tea with Bob and Sarah. His efforts to behave like everyone else are misinterpreted by the grown-ups and lead to a chase in the forest. Ages 5 to 7.

*Pigwig* by John Dyke (Magnet. 95p. 0 416 20980 7) 1978. The course of Pigwig's wooing of the disdainful Matilda in a series of outlandish hats. His last millinery creation helps capture a burglar and win Matilda's love. Ages 5 to 7.

*Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales* edited by Naomi Lewis. Illustrated by Philip

'It's a sort of dressing-gown!'

The conflation of dog and aunt is superb.

A mongol-child and the lesson she teaches the healthily bored about fun, happiness etc is the subject of the longest piece, for which I think the word is "heartwarming": an Aesopian excursion takes us into the world of moralizing sparrows; elsewhere there are distant echoes of Lewis Carroll, Walter de la Mare ("In the chilly evening/The sun is on its knees/Dying by the gravestones/While their shadows freeze/And the dead are walking/Underneath the trees"), and the first Marianne Inagiate — here is "Cleaning Ladies" entire:

Belly stuffed with dust and fluff,

## Looking it up

By Adolf Wood

ALAN ISAACS (Editor):  
*The Macmillan Encyclopedia*  
Macmillan. £14.95.  
0 333 29134 4

As Harold Macmillan says in his foreword, this is Macmillan's "first attempt to produce a comprehensive general encyclopedia covering the whole field of human knowledge within the compass of a single volume". In comprehensiveness, at least, the new work seems to have succeeded admirably: dogged inspection of its contents over many hours has revealed few significant gaps in subject coverage.

According to the publishers, there are some 25,000 articles: these are alphabetically arranged. The *Macmillan Encyclopedia* is pleasingly functional in appearance, with headwords clear and fitting neatly with the text, and the printing and binding of excellent quality. Given its considerable bulk, the volume is surprisingly easy to handle. At £14.95, it should find its way into many a home, office, school, library, or whatever other places the publishers have in mind for it.

But caveat emptor. There are shortcomings, inadequacies, inconsistencies here, to be found in the general approach and treatment as well as in individual entries. While the great majority of items which have been looked at pass muster, and no doubt the experience of the generality of the encyclopedia's users will be that their needs are well and efficiently served, it has rather too many faults for comfort, and is a considerably less distinguished work than one would be entitled to expect from the famous imprint.

Simple spelling errors which elsewhere could be allowed to pass are peculiarly damaging in a work of reference, however good the rest of

*Gough* (Puffin. 95p. 0 14 030333 2) Original. A selection of twelve stories including the familiar ("The Princess and the Pea", "The Ugly Duckling") and the less well known in a new translation with notes. Ages 7 to 11.

*School on the Moon* by Hugh Walters. Illustrated by Trevor Ridley (Abelard. 95p. 0 200 72743 5) Lizzy, Tatty, Bong, Martin, John and Julia go with their parents from England to the first school in space for a year. They help to foil the plans of Mr Dentith the HM and the Rana of Kutch to destroy the colony on the moon. Ages 7 to 11.

*Knock and Wait* by Gwen Grant (Armada Lions. 95p. 0 00 671762 4) A continuation of the adventures of the heroine of *Private, Keep Out!* The breathless first-person account of a year spent in a nursing home in 1949. Ages 7 to 11.

*Cunningham's Little Red Record Book* by Bronnie Cunningham (Puffin. 95p. 0 14 031334 6) Original. A junior book of records collecting improbable anecdotes and facts under such headings as "smells", "ghosts", "stunts" and "the world's worst spelling mistake". Ages 7 to 11.

The Hoover moos and dromes, Grazing down on the carpet pasture: Cow with electric bones.

Up in the tree of a chair the cat Switches off its purr. Stretches, blinks: a neat pink tongue Vacuum-cleans its fur.

The poems are, unfortunately, not exactly strengthened by Posy Simmonds's drawings, which lack the verve of her more telling *Guardian* style. The sketches suggest a watered-down Quentin Blake pastiche, and though harmless enough and occasionally grinning, they have the warmth, but not the edge of the child-like poems' vision. The poems, though, with their sustained sureness of touch and technique, can only increase Kit Wright's stature. Oops.

it may be. Here are examples from *The Macmillan Encyclopedia*: *Mandarin* (thrice); in the entry on encyclopedias, *Chamber's* spell *Chamber's*; *Howards* End with an apostrophe s; and *Becket* (correct in the text) spell *Beckett* in a caption. Mallarmé's *faune* has lost its c; *Mitterrand* has lost an r (and the entry on him now looks cruelly preposterous and brief: though instant dating by events is of course the fate of all encyclopedias).

As already indicated, the coverage of subject areas is on the whole very thorough. But there are weaknesses, which show up especially in the biographies: for example, modern historians get short shrift (one looks vainly for such as Braudel, Foucault, Herbert Butterfield, Frederick Jackson Turner), and the important encyclopedias of our time (no Reinhold Niebuhr, King, Schillebeeckx); among modern writers, Capek and Milosz are excluded, and we have — a reflection of the encyclopedia's tendency; when it comes to twentieth-century figures, to give more attention to celebrity or notoriety than true value. There is an embarrassing, even if understandable, concern to invoke solidarity with young and middle-brow readers in the assiduous coverage of the sport, pop and entertainment worlds, represented by the likes of the cricketer Tony Greig, Stirling Moss, Woody Allen, Steve McQueen, Frank Sinatra, the Rolling Stones, and the Beatles: a concern made the more obtrusive by the overlarge photographs.

As regards the bulk of the material on scientific and technical subjects in this encyclopedia, a proper evaluation must be left to others; but it is clear that in this aspect of the work lies its greatest strength. In the arts, humanities and subjects of general cultural interest, however, the level seldom rises above the merely competent, and quite often sinks to the banal. The publishers' blurb draws particular attention to the role played by the computer in

## Learning by heart

By Eric Korn

*The Old-Fashioned Times Table Book* (0 7062 4085 5)  
*The Old-Fashioned Adding-Up Book* (0 7062 4086 3)  
*The Old-Fashioned Rules of Grammar Book* (0 7062 4890 8)  
*The Old-Fashioned Rules of Spelling* (0 7062 3794 8)  
Ward Lock Educational. 50p each.

The interesting thing about these books is the fact of their existence — and the fact that Ward Lock expect to sell a quarter million of them this year, and to bring out further titles including one on handwriting that, I imagine, will talk about Punctuality being the Politeness of Princes and Canker being one of Plants. There isn't, obviously, a great deal to be said about the contents. The Times Tables are printed in large type, extended from 1x2 to 12x12, contain no glaring errors and show an admirable, and in these relativistic days, an uncommon certitude. Nine times twelve, they aver, equals 108, with no mawkish rubbish about taking it to be 108, or modern research showing that it approaches asymptotically to 108, or there being excellent reasons for assenting to the social consensus that it is 108. There is a total absence of references to *Tabula Rasa*: towards the destructuring of Mathematics or to the latest critical article in *Nombres/Numéros: Revue Mathématique*.

Similarly, *The Old Fashioned Adding-Up Book* tells us in the most unambiguous manner that twenty-six and forty-two make six tens and eight units, with no space at all allowed to dissenting opinions, and no reference to number bonds, mapping, functions or operators. And this of course is what the customers are paying for: the old familiar juice, the reinforcement of belief, the certainty that they will not be shown up by their offspring. But indeed the

Used cautiously, these handbooks will obviously be a great comfort to parents who feel threatened by French-without-tears, algebra-without-sweat, physics-for-fun, and the whole glue-sniffing, disco-dancing, space-invading modern thing. And Ward Lock can go on for ever, producing Old Fashioned Latin (with no medieval neologisms), Old Fashioned History (Kings and Queens from Ethelred to Whom God Preserves), Old Fashioned Religious Education (Thirty-Nine Articles and no damned ecumenism), or Old Fashioned Geography (Belgrad is the capital of Servia).

the compilation and production of the encyclopedia; but one would wish that there had been less reliance on the computer and that it had been informed by more — the

comparison is hard to resist — of the maturity, humanness, and critical awareness combined with flair which make the one-volume *Columbia* such a remarkably good encyclopedia.

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Gollancz



## The book and the mind

By Brian Rotman

NICHOLAS TUCKER

The Child and the Book:  
A Psychological and Literary Exploration  
250pp Cambridge University Press,  
US\$ 22.95

Until now, Nicholas Tucker tells us in his introduction, books on children's literature have been historical surveys, accounts of contemporary books and authors, or pedagogical studies. He offers instead to consider

a previously rather neglected topic: exactly why are certain themes and approaches in children's literature so popular with the young, and what do possible answers to this question tell us both about children and about many of their favourite books? Can the discovery of common factors in the plots or characters... help reveal recurrent, predictable patterns in children's imaginative needs and interests? On looking at this relationship from another angle, can various studies in developmental psychology also sometimes explain why some literary approaches have always seemed more acceptable to the young than others?

"Developmental psychology" turns out to be a certain Piaget-dominated preoccupation with stages of cognitive advance together with a few brief side references to Freud and Jung and a passing mention of Melanie Klein. The developmental approach encourages an ordering by chronology, and Tucker divides his account of children's books accordingly: First books (ages 0-3), Story and picture-books (ages 3-7), Fairy-stories, myths and legends, Early fiction (ages 7-11), Literature for older children (ages 11-14). The approach is empirical and descriptive - popular authors, tales, tendencies, subject-matter, and genres are all noted and briefly commented upon in terms that are intended to illuminate questions of their appeal and popularity. The style is fairly clear and anecdotal and, insofar as judgements are offered, tentative and much qualified. The result feels somewhat like a protracted tour round the children's section of an English school library by a well-informed but not very theoretically minded educationalist - lively for its variety and illustrations but lacking any thesis, framework, or substantive guiding principle that would enable the mind to retain or make much of the details.

The chapter on first books is entirely typical. It starts with the observation that the world is too much for the tiny mind and needs simplifying into clear bold unfussy simple shapes. Next a quotation from Sartre who thought that the illustrations in his beloved *Grand Larousse* represented men and beasts "in person", as opposed to real life where "you met vague shapes which more or less resembled the archetypes without attaining to their

perfection, in the Zoo the monkeys were less like monkeys, and in the Luxembourg Gardens men were less like men." Next some anatomical advice that cloth books are not a good idea (simply colour and unobtrusive shapes) when compared to glossy wipe-clean still-board books. Then the observation that small children do not understand perspective and prefer outlines and suggestions of objects without overlapping. Then a brief reference to Dick Tunna's shift as an illustration.

Directly the sensible but startling observation that "the scene and figures of any picture-book can always have a double significance, both for what such things mean objectively, and also for what they come to signify to the child, in terms - for example - of safe or dangerous, pretty or ugly, nice or nasty, silly or sensible, funny or serious or any other of the host of value judgements with which we monitor the world, but which children have to learn afresh." After this, nursery rhymes are introduced. Again sensible remarks are made about their diverse origins, their usefulness in preparing children for the rhythms of adult speech, the ease with which they can be engaged without being understood, their coded sexual messages, their implicit violence (a nice materialist suggestion here in connection with *Rock-a-bye-baby*: "This contains a good example of concealed aggression often found towards the end of lullabies, inevitable perhaps when a mother's patience is beginning to wear thin"), their infantilization of the adult world, and their frequent references to death. For the last, Tucker offers in quick succession Jung (dreams and games about death stemming from the collective unconscious), Piaget (death as the major cognitive puzzle), and Gesell (death has no meaning for small children), but no mention of Freud or Klein or most surprisingly - given his rich and suggestive work relating children's play to self and absence - of Winnicott.

The rest of Tucker's account continues in the same vein: long on example and short on theoretical awareness. Thus, for example, his reliance on a Piaget-centred approach is doubly unfortunate. To have a book devoted to children and literature underpinned by a psychological theory that is massively insensitive to the way language structure initiates and in some cases creates human thought is a bad idea. Particularly when the theory in question cognitively everything it looks at, reducing children's sense of the world to problems of cognitive competence (of a rigid and blinkered kind). For then, the slide into a patronization of children's imagination and their capacity to absorb and recreate experience in ways not foreseen by adults is irresistible. That such an over-simple and premature closure is clearly unintended by Tucker is a measure of his lack of distance from his theoretical and methodological assumptions.

There is also an unexamined insularity in Tucker's outlook. When this combines with his tropism towards anything that is "popular", the result can be irritating: to spend ten pages on Enid Blyton's confections (and fail to

say anything that is not commonplace) seems an odd and silly way to do it, and focus when not on a particular author or book, but on a particular theme or genre, as in the case of the very young or Frank Baum's Oz stories.

After his survey of the literature Tucker has a long chapter called "Selection, Censorship, and Control." This moves from interesting historical details of various glossings, bowdlerizations, delicious euphemisms, and literary versions of covering piano legs and putting dogs into underpants to present-day problems of whether sexist employees, racial stereotypes, and anti-ecological practices should be banned from books for children. Some of those early nineteenth-century dogs' quarters must indeed have shocked: vampirish attributes of the Virgin Mary, an ass that excreted gold, and little white doves pecking out the eyes of Underella's sisters are all from the Brothers Grimm. A shock quite different, though, from that left from Nazi propaganda for children like "Never Trust a Fox or a Jew". And while it may be legitimate to place the Grimms and Geckels under the common rubric of "censorship", it seems unlikely that Tucker's liberal good sense ("Children's literature, however, will always be picked on more often than adult books for its possible bad effects, reflecting society's desire to produce generations in the mirror of its own most positive values, but without its faults") will provide a vantage point from which to examine literary suppression and the related issue of how societies replicate themselves.

Indeed, in a society where the sign "Books" means magazines catering for every kind of adult (from pseudo-neurotic) and "Adult" is a substitute for porn, the very phrase "Children's Books" is beginning to feel odd. If Tucker's carefully considered debate is put in the context of present-day children in the British Isles, the oddity increases. Such children inhabit an environment where every pavement, hearing, railway station, piece of wasteland, and television screen contains advertisements which systematically sexualize human needs and desires in the name of a gross and unchallenged consumerism. In such circumstances worrying about artistic integrity (whatever that now means) and the remaining of patronizing remarks about a bit from a Roald Dahl story seems a bit like stopping the draft through the keyhole when the roof has blown off.

Of course, Tucker is not responsible for the growing irrelevance of children's literature to the way values and meanings are generated in our society, and in choosing to focus on books in the way that he has, his enterprise is a victim of larger forces. In some sense he knows this - his last chapter "Who reads Children's Books?" is a sobering account of declining readership which includes the statistic from Canada that "the average student about to enter college now has seen more than 500 full-length films, and viewed some 15,000 hours of television but read perhaps only fifty books on his or her own initiative".

## The craftsman's way

By Julia Briggs

ALAN GARNER

A Fine Anger  
A critical introduction to the work of Alan Garner  
Collins, £5.95  
0 00 195043 6

If any practising children's writer invites critical exposition, it is Alan Garner, whose work has always been deliberately parochial, allusive and on occasion obscure, though in his case such terms are a measure of strength as well as of limitation. He has progressed breathtakingly from the sub-Tolkien exuberance of *The Weirdstone* to the chiselled simplicities of the Stone Quarry. In his withdrawal from an oppressive and unassailable urban world to the familiar landscapes of childhood, Garner has followed the example of numerous modern writers and such attitudes, while in themselves no guarantee of authenticity, at least suggest a responsiveness to the literary Zeitgeist unusual in children's fiction. Yet the very qualities that make Garner a suitable case for literary treatment also carry certain risks. The self-consciously mythopoeic nature of his writing can be rummaged for sources, and the influence of modern writers and films charted, but in doing so, the critic risks losing sight of the work as a whole. Neil Philip's study of Garner, *A Fine Anger*, does not always entirely avoid these dangers, but it is nevertheless the fullest and most useful account of his work to date.

As an account, it suffers from an uncertainty of purpose probably connected with its origins as a thesis. The author has not finally decided whether to provide a critical analysis or a scholarly context, and his difficulty is exacerbated by a reluctance to acknowledge that the most ambitious of Garner's work requires elucidation. As it is, he compromises, and with more conscientiousness than artistic justice, affords a chapter to each book. Predictably, those on the early, more derivative novels are less successful, and unnecessary space is wasted on tedious discussions of folk-tale and his sources. Trivial word-changes listed do not illuminate the process of reworking traditional material as a whole, and awkward but important task granted that a substantial amount of Garner's writing has involved the re-imagining of old documents or legends.

The question of difficulty or obliquity naturally comes to a head in the discussion of *Red Shift*, whose very title is full of punning implications. Neil Philip claims that its problems are primarily subjective: lying "more in the assumptions of its critics than its text", they are "most apparent to those who resist the necessary personal involvement". He suggests that the juxtaposition of the three narratives invites the reader to forge his own links between them, rather than the creative reconstruction. This argument would be easier to accept if Garner, like his admired William Golding, did not induce the feeling that, while the author knows exactly what is going on, it is not the function of his lucid style

to inform. Sections of *Red Shift* recall both *The Inheritors* and *The Spiral*, two highly determined novels whose theoretics makes small concessions to the careless reader. The suspicion that there is a certain amount of deliberate obscurity in *Red Shift* is heightened by Tom's coded letter printed in the endpapers. Unlike Tolkien's elvish runes translated in his voluminous appendices, we cannot break Tom's code without knowing the code-word, even supposing we have learnt from *A Fine Anger* what system is being used. Here and elsewhere Alan Garner reveals himself as something of a hermeticist, taking delight in creating puzzles, riddles, esoteric cross-references and allusions that will not reveal themselves on first, or even second reading, defying the assiduous critic to explicate them. Since the publication of *Red Shift* in 1973 in its original form, Garner has gradually revealed in lectures and interviews something of the sources in history and prehistory and the presence of underlying motifs such as the ballad of Tam Lin, information which would have enlightened his first readers considerably. Neil Philip draws on these, helpfully quoting an early account of the Barthomley massacre and examining the background to the legionaries' bid for survival. A map or two would further have enhanced the value of this section.

One reason for the sparse and enigmatic quality of the writing in *Red Shift* is obviously artistic. An ideal of craftsmanship has driven Garner to pare down his text to essentials, a course followed by Kipling with his "draining" process, which involved shelving and then deleting extensively with a blue pencil. There are places where *Red Shift* seems to have been drained too dry. Neil Philip provides a persuasive, if not entirely convincing justification of the love scenes, presented entirely in terms of dialogue. In his eagerness to avoid hackneyed terms for sexual encounters, Garner risks sounding as embarrassed as his adolescent hero, and his technique is in danger of promoting confusion. Reading between the lines, I had always assumed that at the book's climax Tom, in rage and despair, rapes Jan in the castle, at once destroying his relationship with her and denying his identity with his gentler antecedents. Macey and Thomas, but, if Neil Philip shares this view, he certainly gives no indication of it.

From the outset his chief problems as a writer have involved the handling of plot and character, elements that many of his inferior imitators manipulate with ease. Even the brilliant *One Dove* still draws on Celtic myth for its plot, though sharply observed dialogue is increasingly used to create character here. *Red Shift* and the Stone Quarry, in abandoning full-scale plot for epiphany, somehow counter on their characters the necessary freedom to act convincingly. Alan Garner's art, demanding and self-critical, has learnt to disguise or overcome its own weaknesses and each book has shown a remarkable maturation and refinement of the craftsman's skills. Something of this progress is conveyed in *A Fine Anger*, which, while not perhaps the key to all Garner's mythologies, nevertheless provides a serviceable guidebook to the highways and byways of this intriguing author.

## How many walls has a doll's house?

By Inga-Stina Ewbank

A Doll's House

The Other Place, Stratford

Immediately after the first night of the RSC's *A Doll's House* I could not get out of my mind the opening line of Thomas Hardy's "At the round earth's imagined corners,". That the after-vibration was this, and not Nora's world-famous "I am not a doll's house" line, is a little surprising. The production, however, is a masterpiece of understatement and such attitudes, while in themselves no guarantee of authenticity, at least suggest a responsiveness to the literary Zeitgeist unusual in children's fiction. Yet the very qualities that make Garner a suitable case for literary treatment also carry certain risks. The self-consciously mythopoeic nature of his writing can be rummaged for sources, and the influence of modern writers and films charted, but in doing so, the critic risks losing sight of the work as a whole. Neil Philip's study of Garner, *A Fine Anger*, does not always entirely avoid these dangers, but it is nevertheless the fullest and most useful account of his work to date.

This production disproves a number of things. First of all, it disproves that *A Doll's House* is a dated thesis play, or that it survives only by the kind of spurious topicality reflected in several productions and two film versions a few years ago, on the crest of the women's lib movement. Adrian Noble's superb direction obviously springs from a belief in the play as a play, and he seems to have made his cast listen to the voice of Ibsen when, at the banquet given in his honour by the Norwegian Society for Women's Rights in 1898, he discerned his business by disclaiming any connection with their cause: "My task has been the portrayal of human beings".

Secondly it disproves that theatrical realism must mean peeping in on a real-life situation through a missing fourth wall. Kit Surry's design preserves, on a square of brown carpet, all those pieces of furniture and ob-

jects essential in defining the world of this play. Even the traditional porcelain stove is there, cut down to waist-height and marking one of the imagined corners of a world which, thanks to the structure and the small scale of The Other Place, is felt to be at once enclosed and exposed. Thus, through four removed walls, we are made to penetrate Torvald and Nora Helmer's doll's house and are held there, by directness and



Back to the wall: Marita Hunt, Midge Titherage and Henry Hallatt in a 1925 production of *A Doll's House* at the Playhouse Theatre.

## New chamber-pots for old

By R. V. Holdsworth

Eastward Ho

Mermaid Theatre

When Chapman, Jonson and Marston wrote *Eastward Ho* in 1605 they put in a jibe against the new King's practice of selling knighthoods, mimicked his Scottish accent, and recommended that the entire Scottish nation be shipped to Virginia. James did not see the joke. He banned the play, threw the authors in jail, and contemplated the removal of their ears and noses. Perhaps he was provoked, too, by the play's all-round cynicism, its simultaneous galling of citizen and upper-class virtue. Ostensibly upholding the bourgeois decencies of industry, duty, fidelity and thrift, *Eastward Ho* subverts them by making their representatives, the goldsmith Touchstone, his daughter Mildred, and his apprentice Golding, intolerably self-satisfied and prim. Yet the aristocracy fares no better. Gertrude, Touchstone's other daughter, is ridiculed for aspiring to become "a wanton coy thing called a lady", and the decayed knight Sir Petronel Flash is portrayed as a venal fantasist, possessed by a belief that in America the chamber-pots are made of gold, and the people go shrimping for diamonds and rubies.

The Mermaid's latest response to the play (it has performed it twice before, in 1953 and 1962) is to offer a "musical adaptation" directed by Robert Cletwyn; and the result, even if one forgets about the subtle and witty comedy which is virtually obliterated in the process, is unbelievably silly and crude. In the opening song, in which the cast announce "We are the

humours and this is 1605", the characters are introduced in turn: Security as "a money-lending freak who screws you right into the ground", Sir Petronel as "a jaded aristocrat" plotting to get Gertrude's dowry "and bugged off to America", Quicksilver as "a cross between Machiavelli and Fred Astaire", and Gertrude, very imperceptibly, as "a cross between Barbara Cartland and Fanny Hill". What follows is a high-camp pantomime, organized round a medley of set-pieces variously reminiscent of Gilbert and Sullivan, *Okla!oma*, *Oliver*, and *The Rocky Horror Show*, with occasional pauses for laborious spellings-out of the plot.

Thematic point and consistency of character are constantly sacrificed to the score, so that there is no sense of the citizens' smug rectitude (instead, Touchstone sings a ponderous aria proclaiming that "Christian love is a tough love"), and Sir Petronel in his seduction of Security's wife is briefly transformed into a gallant romantic hero. Things pick up slightly in the second half, where the play is more confidently jettisoned. Here the four women come together for a negro blues about their menfolk ("Transparencies are all you're left with in the end"), the prisoners sing "In the Counter" ("Every fetish is respected in the Counter") in apparent imitation of Village People's "In the Navy", and there is a closing extravaganza involving Quicksilver's metamorphosis into a self-flagellating Jesus-freak. The humour, however, remains at the level of antics with a puppet poodle, and Quicksilver relieving himself into a chemical flask.

If there is a single besetting weakness it is Howard Schuman's lyrics and dialogue, which stinks the setting, and provide an object-lesson in how not to modernize the language of a Jacobean play. His substitutions include curiously dated pseudo-slang ("If anyone can lay his mitts on that kind of scratch, it's Quicksilver"), risible attempts to preserve an impression of seventeenth-century speech ("You scratch my back, and I will scratch thine"), and melodramatic simplifications worthy of Naima Tate. Sir Petronel, fed up with his wife, declares "Another night with a rapacious sow. Yes, I must get to Virginia", and Security, deserted by his, protests "I gave her everything. I must banish these wild thoughts. Life is insupportable".

Faced with such hatching, it seems trivial to complain about the loss of Gertrude's footman, whose name is Hamlet, and whose first entrance is greeted with the rebuke "Stout, Hamlet, are you mad?"

their full dramatic world. Nora's prolonged lighting of Dr Rank's last cigar, or of course her tantalizing where she (Cheryl Campbell) ends up, all games finished and all masks dropped, like a *ludus* - a wild wood-trail, hiding in her tangled dove hair from the unspeakable and the ineluctable. In this world, within the bourgeois setting, extreme acts and steps are natural. In its dramatic logic it is as natural for a housemaid to get out of bed to receive a letter for her master at one o'clock in the morning after Boxing Day, as it is for a syphilitic doctor to diagnose his own becoming disintegration and celebrate it by delivering black-crossed visiting cards.

Treasuring the sheer theatricality of the piece (which is why it never, even in the potentially embarrassing monologues of think-out-loud, becomes melodrama), the cast leave out of it an extraordinary mixture of fun, despair and defiance. The children come in from their Christmas Eve walk, straight out of a Carl Larsson painting. Their hide-and-seek with Nora is interrupted by a Kriststad (Bernard Lloyd) who is more like a parent-loving than the traditional blackmailing villain, and whose personal motives have an Othello-like intensity: when Kristine left him for money, chaos came again. Marjorie Hland's Mrs Linde is all subtlety, her still and beautiful face haunted by past tensions, and the almost short-hand scene where she and Kriststad wear each other makes sense as I have never seen it do before.

So does the scene where Dr Rank (John Franklin-Robbins) and Nora virtually make love to each other through a dialogue about the goose liver, truffle, oysters and champagne which Rank's father consumed, with fatal consequences for his son's spine; for once the flesh-coloured silk-stockings are simply the climax of an erotic game. For once, too, the endgame when Nora, disillusioned and enlightened, sits down to talk to her husband, is the climax of the whole play. At the Criterion, eight years ago, Colin Blakeley was a Torvald with gradually dawning perceptions, searching for a language to use to this strange new wife. At The Other Place Stephen Moore elings to the udder of supreme, if well-meaning, selfishness to the very end, when suddenly his untouched public-school boy's face crumples and he sobs like the child he has taken Nora to be, unable to bear so much reality.

This scene, like the whole production, owes much of its life to Cheryl Campbell's marvellous Nora - her range and her absolute control. She covers in a few minutes as much as Torvald's "squirrel" and "lark", and through extremes of emotion, with a growing inwardness which makes her last stance seem inevitable. From the first ever production of *A Doll's House* in Copenhagen in 1879 - when a reviewer lamented that Ibsen had created a part which demanded an instantaneous transformation "from a little Nordic 'Frog-Frog' to a Søren Kierkegaard in skirts" - Nora's transition has been a problem. Cheryl Campbell presents it as sheer dramatic logic.

What, then, is so good about this production? It gives us what Ibsen's theatrical art, almost impossibly, asks for: careful ensemble playing, on the one hand, and an intense inwardness in individual characters, on the other. It gives us an Ibsenite world of tragicomic in which people can be unrelentingly awful to each other while heroically searching for their own selves. Shaw thought that "A Doll's House" will be as flat as ditchwater when *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will still be fresh as work in the world; and that is enough for the highest genius, which is always intensely utilitarian. The RSC production proves him wrong on every point except that of genius.

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## Oxford University Press

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## commentary

### The crushable and the crushing

By Hilary Spurling

Quartet  
Various cinemas

It is not at all fashionable these days to express doubts about Jean Rhys or the women she wrote about, so it comes as something of a shock to find Ruth Praver Jhabvala (who provided the screenplay for James Ivory's film of Rhys's first novel, *Quartet*) freely admitting that she feels scant sympathy for either. But her detachment proves in fact one of the great strengths of this enigmatic film. Another is the casting of Isabelle Adjani as Marya Zelli, first in a long line of self-absorbed and woefully sensitive heroines, here played as a standing invitation to the sadists always lurking in abnormally large numbers in the Rhysian undergrowth. Pale, plump, passive, exquisitely crushed and crushable, Adjani with her big brown apprehensive eyes and quivering red lips embodies an unexpectedly detached, even clinical approach to this supremely narcissistic writer.

It is only one of several shifts accomplished by Ivory and Jhabvala, who enthusiastically succumb to the temptation (nearly always irresistible to anyone who adapts or writes about Jean Rhys) to readjust the proportions in which she herself mixed fact with fiction. *Quartet* was published in 1928 and based on an affair with Ford Madox Ford, the book's H. J. Heidler (Ford had recently changed his name from Hueffer) who, with his wife's connivance, seduces, seduces, enchants and eventually ditches Marya while her husband is in prison. The film stops short of roving in Hemingway (model for the ineffectual, owlish friend played by Wiley Wood) but goes far enough to credit Marya with her creator's West Indian background, and turn Alan Bates into an only slightly glamorized version of Ford in the

1920s: a figure both absurd and formidable, genial, faithful and inordinately attractive to much younger women in spite of perhaps because of his flat feet, bad teeth, brick-red complexion and head "like Humpty Dumpty's except for the walrus moustache".

Perhaps more important is the way that *Quartet*'s plot – the wife procuring girls to placate a husband who scrupulously preserves the public surface of their marriage for her sake – so closely resembles Ford's *The Good Soldier*, published nearly ten years before he so much as set eyes on Jean Rhys. Whether she was simply dazzled by Ford as a writer at the start of her own career, or whether his obsession with this particular situation had in fact spilled over from art to life, hardly matters. *Quartet* is the story of Maisie Maitland's betrayal by Edward Ashburnham (another romantic projection of Ford himself) in *The Good Soldier*, seen through Maisie's eyes; and the film exploits the fact to huge advantage.

It is not simply that the plot is heightened, telescoped, made more explicit, its reversals harsher and its revelations more drastic. The fiercest dramatic impact comes from the sense of corruption and duplicity seeping slowly across humdrum sunlit breakfasts in the Heidlers' luxurious apartment, or a cheerless shooting party in gilded autumn woods. Being in this film is more frightful to watch than the two Heidlers, taking a country drive with Marya between them in the trap and hardly a word spoken from start to finish. The whole moves steadily towards the spectacle of what Ivory himself, reviewing Kevin Billington's TV film of *The Good Soldier*, called "the English upper class... spinning out of control and crushing in a satisfying way, until the stage is littered with corpses and the survivors left to piece together the story for themselves".

Admittedly, *Quartet* ends in loss and desolation rather than madness and death, and the setting has moved from pre-First World War Germany to 1920s Paris: Ivory substitutes Bonnard's café scenes for Billington's full dress interiors by Sargent. But the elaborately calm surface, cracked and shadowed by horrors beneath it, is the same. Maisie Smith as Lois Heidler in the nightclub, glittering in her sequined silver sheath and skullcap, is menace incarnate: remorseless, rapacious, hawklike, poised to sink her talons into the defenceless Marya who winces, as well she may, at the sardonic creak with which her hostess transforms a trip to Luna Park into a vision of hell: "We'll put Marya on the Joy Wheel and watch her being banged about a bit".

But the cry is as pitiless as it is cruel. What Ivory and Jhabvala have imported is an alien ambivalence, something altogether different from Jean Rhys's bleak and bitter clarity. Maggie Smith's Lois seems in some lights as frail, vulnerable, shrinking as her victim, Bates's Heidler survives only by their stratagem of desperate complexity. Husband and wife in the end dominate the film as they do *The Good Soldier*. What remains, beneath the meticulously reconstructed street scenes, bars and nightclubs, the alternating opulence and desolation, what Jhabvala has said of a film that owes perhaps as much to Ford as to Jean Rhys: "What a terrible bunch of people they were, trapped in a terrible situation".

The Arts Council has just appointed four new members to its Literature Advisory Panel. Professor John Bayley, the poet David Harner, Catherine Freeman (a senior producer at Thames Television) and the biographer Michael Holroyd take up some of the places left vacant, in the course of a troubled year, by Melvyn Bragg, Margaret Forster, Elizabeth Jane Howard, Graham Martin, G. W. Nicholls, Fraser Steel and John Whitley.

The surviving members of the panel are Marghanita Laski, who took over from Melvyn Bragg as chairwoman in the middle of the year; Liz Calder, Robert Gavron (chairman of a printing company), Miles Huddleston (publicity director of Constable), Philip Larkin, Isabel Quigley and Fay Weldon.

### Given the bird

By Richard Osborne

Down by the Greenwood Side  
Cottesloe Theatre

In the first volume of his *Early English Stages*, Glynne Wickham gives short shrift to the St George Plays, Robin Hood Plays and May King Games which were so popular with village amateurs and mummers in medieval England. Useful for raising small change for private use, they served no greater purpose, Professor Wickham suggests, than do carol-singers or the makers of guys in more recent times.

In *Down by the Greenwood Side*, Michael Nyman and Harrison Birtwistle retain much of the uproarious naivety of pastoral knockabout but choose to stiffen the mixture (and justify their own rather portentous sub-title "A Dramatic Pastoral") by stirring in the ballad of the Cruel Mother. The Cruel Mother, you may recall, murders her unwanted child, but promises silk raiments to two children she later meets; to which one of the precocious bairns replies "O mother dear, when I was thine / You did na prove to me sate kind". All very spooky but making only a generalized impression in Birtwistle's score because of the difficulty the ear has in disentangling the words from a vocal line that all too freely soars and dips. Faced with this, the only singing part in the entertainment, Teresa Cahill did little more than ominously recur.

Towards the end of the forty-minute show, we gathered that St George (played by Michael Thomas, masked, and gleaming like Lohengrin) probably fathered the mad woman's brain. In his introductory note, Harrison Birtwistle makes mention of St George's link with resurrection dramas. In the event, *Down by the Greenwood Side*, like its medieval predecessors, seemed as much concerned with erection as resurrection. There is a mock castration and much pointed caressing and manoeuvring of Father Christmas's broom handle. As for St George, he is treated as the butt of his disaffected countrymen. Today we have other surrogates through which to

channel national self-doubt: football managers and cricket testees. Indeed, as St George was trounced by the blackmoor Bold Slasher (James Hayes) there was a clear sense of St George 0, Slasher 1. And after a nasty piece of underhand work with a curved scimitar it was St George 0, Slasher 2, with Slasher booked for ungentlemanly conduct.

The on-stage ensemble takes its instruments from a verse in "The Floral Dance" – "We danced to the band with a curious tone. Of the cornet, clarinet, and big trombone / Fiddle, cello, big bass drum / Bassoon, flute and euphonium" – and is much given to exploitation of the orchestral raspberry. Father Christmas (David Roper) and Bold Slasher are more or less persistently greeted with ood fanfares and salvos on the timpani. Admirers of Birtwistle's *Punch and Judy* may catch here and there an echo of that score's baleful, devil-may-care nastiness; but *Down by the Greenwood Side* is generally less ordered, broader, and less witty (an equestrian schizoid notwithstanding). At one point Birtwistle, with mock humility, acknowledges the fact by getting Father Christmas to tell the band to shut up; but when Dr Blood appears (a Sweeney Todd figure in striped trousers and a bowler hat) to effect his miracle "cure" the music is wonderfully stilled as if in some comic inversion of a moment from *Wozzeck*. Elsewhere, Birtwistle, like Maxwell Davies, has the gift of being able to articulate the often angular and dissonant sounds of the natural world. No sound is dissonant which tells of life, says Coleridge in his disquisition on the nightfall rook; and Birtwistle's score might be said by charitable and imaginative listeners to catch some sense of the mystery, menace and vigour of the woodland scene.

The new platform production at the Cottesloe, a 6.00 pm show which can be seen again on July 28, is vigorously and colourfully staged. It is a pantomime world where ten years ago on Brighton Pier) and Birtwistle's own staging (helped by Stuart Hopps's movement and fight sequences by John Wilkinson) is properly vigorous and uncomplicated.

### Among this week's contributors

GERALD ABRAHAM's books include *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 1980.

JANET ADAM SMITH's most recent book is *John Buchan and his World*, 1979.

FLEUR ADOCK's most recent collection of poems, *The Inner Harbour*, was published in 1979.

RODRICK BEATON is the author of *Folk Poetry of Modern Greece*, 1980.

ALAN BOLD is currently completing a book on twentieth-century Scottish literature and a critical study of Hugh MacDiarmid.

PATRICK BOWLES is a lecturer at the University of Paris VII.

GORDON BROTHERTON is Professor of Literature at the University of Essex. His books include *Latin American Poetry*, 1978.

RICHARD BROWN is co-editor of *The James Joyce Broadsheet*.

GEORGEY CARNALL edited and completed John Butt's volume in the *Oxford History of English Literature, The Mid-Eighteenth Century*, 1979.

RICHARD COMES is editor of the British Film Institute's *Monthly Film Bulletin*.

SARAH COAKLEY is a lecturer in Religious Studies at the University of Lancaster.

JOHN COVENTRY S.J. is Master of St Edmund's House, Cambridge. His books include *Faith in Jesus Christ*, 1980.

DENIS DONOHUE is Henry James Professor of Letters at New York University.

DOUGLAS DUNN's new collection of poems, *St Kilda's Parliament*, will be published in the autumn.

INGA-STINA EWBANK is Professor of English at Bedford College, London. Her translation of Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman* was performed by the National Theatre Company in 1976.

PETER FAWCETT is a lecturer in French at the University of Leicester.

D. K. FIELDHOUSE is Smuts Professor Elect of the History of the British Commonwealth, at Cambridge. His books include *Economics and Empire 1830-1914*, 1973.

ROGER GARRITT's most recent poems are published in *Wall*, a collaboration between four poets and four artists on the theme of Hadrian's Wall.

VICTORIA GLENDINNING's *Edith Sitwell: A Unicorn Among Lions* is published next week.

ROBERT HALSBAND is Professor of English at the University of Illinois.

HAROLD HOBSON is an Honorary Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

R. V. HOLDSWORTH's edition of Jonson's *Epiche* was published in 1979.

MICHAEL IRWIN is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Kent. His recent books include *Picturing: Description and Illusion in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, 1979.

HUGH LLOYD-JONES's most recent book is *Collected Essays on the Classical Tradition*, 1980.

CHARLES MADGE's *Inner City, Poverty in Paris and London*, in collaboration with Peter Wilmore, will be published later this year.

ROBERT BERNARD MARTIN's *Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart* has been awarded the Duff Cooper and the James Tait Black Prizes and the Royal Society of Literature's Award.

PHILIP MASON's recent books include *Kipling: The Glass, The Shadow and The Fire*, 1975, and *Skinner of Skinner's Horse*, 1979.

WILFRID MELLERS's *Bach and the Dance of God* was published earlier this year.

RICHARD OSBORNE is a regular contributor to *Gramophone*.

NESTA ROBERTS is the author of *The Face of France*, 1976.

FRANCES SPALDING's biography of Roger Fry was published last year.

HILARY SPURLING is the author of *Why When Young: the Early Life of Compton-Burnell*, 1974.

ALBERT STACPOOLE OBE is Master of St Benet's Hall, Oxford.

HUGO WILLIAMS's collections of poems include *Love Life*, 1980.

PHYLLIS WILLMOTT is currently working on a comparative study of unemployment in Britain, Germany and France.

JEAN WILSON's *Entertainments for Elizabeth I* was published last year.

### Matthew Josephson

Sir. – Matthew Josephson cannot, of course, reply to the attack on him by Julian Symons (June 26), which is as nasty as it is unfactual. As one of Josephson's friends in the later years of his life, may I cite some corrective facts, which were available to Symons in the biography he was reviewing and which he omitted to share with your readers.

Symons offers a picture of Josephson as a "well-heeled" Left intellectual with "a standard of living which included a New York apartment and a country home in Connecticut".

Josephson and his wife, Hannah, lived in several Greenwich Village apartments over the years, all of them small and, after the Second World War, rent-controlled. Their monthly rent rarely exceeded \$200. In 1930, the couple purchased 12,000 acres in the village of Sherman, Connecticut, a place inhabited also by Malcolm Cowley and Peter Blum, the painter. The Josephson land included a small habitable farmhouse, and it was bought with money left over from an inheritance. Six hundred dollars an acre is hardly a princely sum, even by 1930 standards, and it virtually exhausted the family savings.

In succeeding years, the Josephsons put two sons through college out of Matthew's freelance earnings, which were frugally spent. As a visitor to the farmhouse and to their last Village apartment, I can testify that the Josephsons were carefully comfortable but never in the limousine crowd, as Symons suggests.

So, it is untrue that Josephson's "greatest achievement was in having his cake and eating it too". Symons calls him "the perfect revolutionary simpleton" for having espoused the Left in the 1930s and for declining to recant in the 1940s.

Along with Edmund Wilson, Theodore Dreiser, Waldo Frank, Malcolm Cowley, John Dos Passos and Lewis Corey, Josephson was one of a group of some fifty writers and intellectuals to appeal for the Communist presidential ticket in 1932. He went on to oppose vocally the rise of Hitler and Franco. He was a very early (1933) perceiver of the antisemitic content of German Fascism and to speak out against the tortures of the Brown Shirts.

Josephson's attitude then and later was that to oppose poverty and social dislocation at home and Fascism abroad was nothing to apologize for, much less to recant. His autobiographical *In the Temple*, unmentioned by Symons, contains his explanation.

I should add that Matthew Josephson felt reinforced by his decision not to recant his actions of the 1930s by observing the sorry course of many of those who did deny themselves and became informers for Congressional witch-hunters in the Cold War.

Symons seeks to make Josephson somehow ignoble because he "turned Left" and neglected later to say he was sorry. Well, he wasn't sorry, nor should he have been. Josephson had many faults, some of which David Shi picks up in his academic vacuum-cleaner biography, but repentance for what he strongly regarded as virtue was not among them. If it was wrong to have been anti-Fascist, so be it. But, please let the record say, not for Matthew Josephson.

ALDEN WHITMAN.

Major's Path, Southampton, New York 11968.

### Books and Society in History

Sir. – As a footnote to the recent interesting article by G. Thomas Lancelle in the *TLS* (June 5), I should like your readers to know that the Library of Congress, with sponsorship by its Center for the Book, will publish the papers of the Boston conference on "Books and Society in History". Those wishing to be notified when the volume is available should write to the Center for the Book.

JOHN Y. COLE.

Executive Director, The Center for the Book, The Library of Congress, Washington DC 20540.

### Megalithic Art

Sir. – Stuart Pigott, in his interesting review of Elizabeth Shaw Twibg's *The Megalithic Art of Western Europe* (July 3), says that "Colin Renfrew in 1973... demolished the thesis of the oriental origin of the Western European megaliths on the grounds of 'absolute chronology alone'". Surely both the date and the swiftness of the change in archaeological opinion are wrongly reported? Renfrew's *Before Civilisation* (1973), to which Professor Pigott alludes, was less the storming of an academic citadel than a popular and *ex post facto* account of the gradual undermining of an entrenched position, a long-drawn-out skirmish in which Renfrew and others fought dogmatically from 1967 onwards. Renfrew's 1970 paper in *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society* made the major points of the 1973 book, and his divorcing of megalithic Stonehenge from its supposed ancestry in Mycenaean Greece appeared in the *Annals of the British School at Athens* in 1967. Both papers were based on the collection of radiocarbon dates against a tree-ring chronology based on solar years (and hence compatible with east Mediterranean historical chronologies), published by Hans Suess in *Radiocarbon* in 1965. Renfrew was the first archaeologist astute enough to see the potential of the calibrated time-scale for back-dating part of European prehistory.

The west European megaliths

were, however, already known to be far older than their supposed Aegean progenitors, on the basis of *undated* radiocarbon dates: at a lecture to the Society of Antiquaries on October 22, 1964, Glyn Daniel presented an "Absolute Chronology of the Megaliths of Europe" with an accompanying list of radiocarbon dates which he had assembled. These showed clearly that the megaliths of Brittany and the western British Isles were centuries older than those of Denmark and Iberia, with dates in the third millennium BC matched only by the Maltese "temples". Even the earlier Danish and Iberian dates were substantially earlier than the historical dates for Mycenaean Greece. Glyn Daniel passed out copies of the date-list to all of his undergraduates for use, and the chronological priority and independence of the northwest European megaliths, and those of Malta, over the superficially similar Aegean tombs was a commonplace in the Department of Archaeology at Cambridge in 1964-65; the implications for European prehistory were certainly clear to those of us lucky enough to have been pupils of the late David Clarke at that time.

NORMAN HAMMOND.

Wholeyway, Harlow, Cambridge.

### Foucault

Sir. – It is good to read so sympathetic and informative an account of Deleuze's and Guattari's *Millé Plateaux* as John Forrester's (July 3). This is all the more admirable in that Forrester has serious misgivings about the book. He is, however, less than fair to Foucault, twice mentioned as representing a pessimistic view of politics in contrast with that of Deleuze/Guattari. There is, I believe, no such contrast, and I think all three would agree on that. As Forrester points out, they share a belief in the ubiquity, all-pervasiveness, and inevitability of power relations, and reject a dialectical notion of change through totalized class conflict. But at this point, Forrester seems to believe, Foucault abandons himself to "stoical pessimism", while Deleuze/Guattari go off on to "something more positive".

This is to ignore two crucially important and original aspects of Foucault's notion of power: first, that it is not only negative and restrictive, but also positive and productive and, secondly, that wherever power percolates downwards (that is, everywhere), there is a commensurate possibility of reversal and opposition – not the totalized, centralized, unified opposition envisaged by the Marxists, but fragmented, localized, and linked, if at all, serially.

The difference between Foucault and Deleuze/Guattari, who are the first to recognize their debt to Foucault, is not a substantive one, but one of style. Foucault has always moved cautiously; Deleuze

and Guattari risk more and are more likely to fall flat on their faces. The reference to "optimism" and "pessimism" in relation to these thinkers is, in any case, misplaced, in my view, altogether too reluctant of the type of totalized thinking that characterizes religions or systems like Marxism. John Forrester even seems to suggest that a certain moral taint attaches to "pessimism". I'm sure he doesn't intend it to, but this sounds frightfully like Soviet literary criticism. Anyway, I would have thought that misplaced "optimism" had caused enough horror in the twentieth century to make cautious scepticism a "healthier" outlook.

ALAN SHERIDAN.

Ashtree Cottage, Fen Ditton, Cambridge.

### 'Dying, in Other Words'

Sir. – With reference to Stoddard Martin's review of my novel *Dying, in Other Words* in last week's *TLS*, since the only thing Mr Martin seems to have noticed about the book is the plot, it is a shame he should have got that wrong in every particular. Felicity does not teach retarded children: he has confused her with Clara. Felicity is not fat. Clara is. John does not leave his wife for Moira. Felicity does not drown in the bath: she burns to death. Macbeth had no intimate contact with Moira at all, though Mr Martin imagines that he took her virginity. Clothilde, at ninety, is certainly not studying to be an artist; this is presumed as her delusion. None of these characters smokes marijuana, and nor does its author, so that the "lost marijuana duds" were in the head of the reviewer, where they seem to have muddled him up very thoroughly indeed.

As it happens, the book is not the random catalogue of sexual violence he suggests, but a novel about novels, a literary text. If "self-conscious" novels are *per se* bad, as Mr Martin implies, then authors like Nabokov, Borges, Vonnegut etc have been very lucky to get away with it for so long.

A. N. WILSON.

C/o A. D. Peters Ltd, 10 Buckingham Street, London WC2.

### Hilaire Belloc

Sir. – May I use your columns to announce that I am at work on an official biography of Hilaire Belloc?

If any of your readers have memories, anecdotes or manuscript material which they would like incorporated in this work, I should be very pleased to hear from them.

A. N. WILSON.

### Admiral Lord Cunningham

Sir. – We are in the last stages of preparing a book based on testimonies of the war in Greece in the years 1940-41, including naval activities and battles in the Mediterranean during that period.

We would like to verify a testimony we received, according to which Admiral Lord Cunningham was shipwrecked in the second part of 1941 during a naval battle near Corsica and was rescued from the sea by a Greek sailor, who allegedly brought him ashore on a French-speaking island. Both rescuer and rescued were later transferred to Malta, the rescuer being later commissioned as an officer in the British Navy.

We should be very grateful for any first-hand information confirming the story. We would also welcome, with this opportunity, any other eye-witness testimonies covering the period 1940-41 relating to the Battle of Crete, May, 1941.

Kindly address your letters to Mrs Maria S. Fafalios, 36 Wildwood Road, London NW11.

C. N. HARDIPATERAS.

MARIA S. FAFALIOS.

The book reviewed by James Lasdun in last week's *TLS* should have been listed on the Contents page as *A House Under Old Sarum* by Joan Barton, and not *A House Under Strain* by Joan Barton as printed.

### Get him to the church

By Julie Curtiss

Marriage  
BBC TV

The idea that Russian men find it hard to get out of bed is familiar to us from Goncharov's *Obsession*, and it is a symbol for a type of ineffectuality and apathy which was to be explored lovingly by Turgenev and Chekhov in the later part of the century. It is, however, in Gogol's *Marriage*, which dates from the 1830s, that the image of *homo horizontalis* first makes its appearance. Podkolyosin lies on his divan and puffs at his pipe, toying with the notion of marriage. Suddenly his energetic – and unimpaired married – friend Kochkaryov arrives, urges him to get up, introduces him to a girl and despatches her other suitors. But Podkolyosin loses his nerve as he is about to leave for the church, leaps out of the window and vanishes in a cab, presumably back to the safety of his single bed.

Out of this simple plot Gogol creates a farce with a sharp edge of satire to it. The message, ill-received by the first audience in 1842, is that men enter into marriage solely in order to satisfy convention, social pretensions, erotic fantasies or mere financial interest. Agatya, the merchant's daughter who is the object of the suitors' rivalry, is no less ineffectual; she is determined to marry into a nobler level of society, but is otherwise so incapable of deciding between them that she has to draw lots.

Directors of the play have a choice between interpreting it as farce or as satire. Moscow was treated to a satirical reading bordering on the tragic in the much-acclaimed 1975 production by Anisimov. Eros for the Malayas Bromaya Theatre. The imagery of the play centres on the bed and Eros dwell on Agatya's humiliation by society (a theme often evoked in Michael Simp-

son's BBC production in the glimpse of the caged bird which precedes our first sight of her). Eros also invented tableaux to expose the sexual frustrations of all the characters, creating over all a damning portrait of an idle and sterile society.

Not so Simpson's production, which takes a more traditional option of farce. This decision may in part have been prompted by the exuberance of Eric Bentley's new version of the play; glossing rather than translating, Bentley above all achieves zippy dialogue. Thus "Don't you tell me a whole lot of nonsense about the bride" becomes "Cut the cackle", and the ironical "I bet you've netted some fine ones in your time" appears as "Nice bunch of boobies!". Awkwardnesses, such as the anachronous reference to a "traffic smash", are rare. Bentley understands that he does not attempt a close rendering of the complex exchanges of proverbs and Biblical quotations between the eager friend Kochkaryov and Fyokla, the matchmaker whose role he assumes. Instead these are reworked, as in the following: "Once you've buttered your bread you've got to lie on it".

Dinah Stabb as Agatya is perhaps excessively gentle in contrast to the other characters, but she rolls her eyes very charmingly. John Wood is a splendidly limp Podkolyosin, well-matched by the restless energy of Gawn Grainger's Kochkaryov as he struggles, for reasons that remain obscure, to impel his friend to action. Amongst the suitors, Stratford Johns as the preposterous Mr Ormel is an agreeable surprise in a generally enjoyable and light-hearted production. After all, we don't want too much sex, politics or feminism in the month of The Wedding. Is there a guard on duty beneath the windows of the Palace. I wonder?

Commentary continues on page 853.

A first-class tale that older children will love. Like all good stories it is all the better for being based on a real character, Jamie. *Manchester Evening News*

**THE LIGHTHOUSE BOY**  
A novel for younger readers  
CRAIG MAIR

"Offers sharpness of observation and clarity of heart in a picture of the building of the Bell Rock lighthouse off Arbroath, in the early 1800s under the direction of the admirable engineer Robert Stevenson, grandfather of Robert Louis. The standpoint is that of a boy, Jamie, a big, strong lad whose drunkard father has been pre-ganged and who supports his mother and sister by working in the supply vessel and on the rock itself." *Daily Telegraph*  
0 7195 3824 6 Drawings by Ray Evans £4.95

JOHN MURRAY





## Mixtli impressions

By Gordon Brotherston

GARY JENNINGS:  
Aztec  
754pp, Macdonald. £7.95.  
354 04635 7

The Holy Roman Emperor Charles V was hardly renowned for his curiosity about American Indians. Yet there is no inherent reason why in 1529 he should not have issued to Zumarraga, then bishop of Mexico, the request which prompts Gary Jennings's novel: "That we be better acquainted with our colony of New Spain . . . we order that you shall inform yourself from ancient Indians as to their country's history, their governments, their traditions, their customs etc." To satisfy this curiosity Zumarraga employs an old Aztec, Mixtli, to tell all he knows, sending the results back to Spain in twelve instalments along with explanatory letters of his own. In fact the whole of *Aztec* consists of ostensibly authentic documents, pieced together to provide a first-person account of

Mexican life between the years 1466 and 1531 AD — Years 13 Rabbit and 13 Reed in the Aztec calendar.

Over this period, and at the leisurely pace afforded by the book's seven hundred-odd pages, we follow Mixtli through the most various estates and conditions, in "The One World" (an Aztec name for their empire). Born the son of a quarryman on the island Xaltocan, Mixtli gains the privilege of an education at Texcoco ("the Athens of Mexico"); then, after serving the Aztec emperor across the lake at Tenochtitlan, he travels his *pochteca* along the eastern tribute road to Oaxaca and Xoconochco. After marrying he travels as a trader in his own right, crossing the western frontier into Michoacan and on up into the northern fastnesses of the Tarahumara. He also goes off on an archaeological search for the old Aztec homeland Aztlan (invoked nowadays, though with scant geographical precision, by the Chicanos). In the final two instalments of his narrative Mixtli encounters the Spanish invaders, first as an ambassador and then as the dispossessed citizen who ends up telling his story to Zumarraga.

The Mixtli/Jennings narrative does not always update the highly-coloured version of the Aztecs and their invader Cortes, first propagated in English by W. H. Prescott. In the highland valley we find the same opposition between "civilized" Texcoco on the last bank of the lake and the "upstart" Tenochtitlan on the west; and we catch the same whiff of nostalgia for the noble religion of the "vanished" Toltecs. Yet for the most part the perspective in *Aztec* is quite new, like that of Carlos Fuentes, whose no less weighty historical volume *Terra nostra* focuses on the same epic encounter with Cortes. Throughout, Jennings has drawn heavily on recent research on Mesoamerica and the Aztec world, the better to show how its peoples once lived, talked, ate, worked, coupled, cleaned their teeth, travelled, smoked, hallucinated, fought and died. As if to compensate for the dearth of his kind of detail in the past, we are regaled with a mass of domestic and regional minutiae.

In terms of how Jennings has chosen to narrate and structure his novel, the most interesting thing about Mixtli is the fact that he is a poet-scribe, one trained at Texcoco in the rhetoric of spoken Nahuatl or Aztec, and in the iconography and syntax of native script. For much of the novel's power stems from Nahuatl sources transcribed into the alphabet after the Spanish invasion, not just the direct quotations from Nahuatl poems and of set pieces (like the midwife's prayers for the new-born), but the whole range of devices used by Mixtli to keep his audience alert.

With "But now, what am I to say? What should I cause your ears to hear?", he echoes the mincing courtesy of the Aztec priests who defied the Twelve Franciscans sent by Charles V in 1524 ("And now what? How is it, what are we supposed to say, what shall we present to your ears?"). And in telling each episode of his story, Mixtli offers us brilliant and clear-contoured images that are shown to derive from the Mexican script he once wrote in and which can be seen in the native screenfold books that survive in libraries today.

As a result, we begin to acquire Mixtli's verbal-visual vocabulary, and to learn the professional language and etymologies according to which his world actually functioned. And if it is true that Jennings occasionally strays into didacticism, most of the time he succeeds in exerting a fascination he assures us was initially felt by Charles V.

## Enfant terrible

By Sally Ramsey

BARBARA HANRAHAN:  
The Frangipani Gardens  
224pp, University of Queensland Press. £5.75.  
0 7022 1563 5

John Clare's exhortation to his reader to journey "through the valley depths of shade/O' night and dark obscurity" may prove a fitting preface to Barbara Hanrahan's latest novel, but the presiding genius, whose work illuminates and clarifies the world of *The Frangipani Gardens*, is Verlaine. Essentially, the novel is an admirably sustained *filie* *galante* with all the impressionistic mystery and costumed glamour of its French counterpart, combined with that same concentration upon the seam of perversion and vice that threatens continually to topple the *chéri*/woman. Kathleen ("Girle") O'Brien, abnormally small but of considerable exotic beauty, who, with her alarming mixture of guileless innocence and twisted eroticism, clearly recalls "L'implaceable enfant/Préte or relevant/Ses jupes" of the Verlaine poem. The action of the novel traces the inevitable shift from innocence to experience. So, the estate known as Flower Hill becomes *The Frangipani Gardens*, and its natural

## All at sea

By Peter Norman

RAYMOND KENNEDY:  
Columbine  
378pp, Collins. £7.95.  
0 00 222142 X

Any novel which centres upon an older man's sexual obsession with its eponymous pubescent heroine invites immediate comparison with Nabokov's *Lolita*. Unfortunately, any such novel is also likely to suffer from being held up to that remarkable work, and in this case Raymond Kennedy's linguistic resources are no match for the baroque glitter of Nabokov's prose. It must also be said, though, that *Columbine* is far from being prudently exploitative, and that excitable critical comments of the " . . . makes *Lolita* look like *Little Women*" variety would be quite inappropriate. It is a very restrained book, modest in every sense of the word.

Columbine Kokoriss is the thirteen-year-old youngest daughter of a Lithuanian couple in post-war middle America. Henry Flynn is the boy next door, ten years her senior, a diffident young man who has had inconclusive attachments with each of her three elder sisters, interrupted by wartime service in the US Navy. He begins to realize that he has been following his way down to Columbine, and that it is she who has interested him all along. Precociously smart, she encourages his interest and an uncertain relationship develops, which Kennedy invests with a vaguely portentous, mythic quality, symbolized by her use of Henry's middle name, Starbuck, rather than his prosaic nickname, Herky. Eventually, however, frustrated by their inability to define and consummate their relationship, Henry and Columbine seek alternative means of losing their virginity, he to an aggressively lustful woman and she to a local roughneck.

The immediate post-war setting is important: we see something of the increased affluence and the loosening of family restraints which allow young teenage girls to recognize and exploit their sexual attractiveness in short to become Nabokovian "nymphets". At the same time a nineteenth-century notion of prolonged, essentially innocent childhood continues to prevail, affecting in particular Henry, whose emotional and sexual development has been

retarded by his naval years at a RN base in the South Pacific. There, while his peers gained valuable experience with Polynesian prostitutes, he apparently spent his days picking up peculiarly British expressions such as "I'll tell you this, Herky old hat, it's a sticky business." He is ill-equipped to deal with subtlety; the ambiguous complicity of his parents and Columbine's own maddening attempts at seductiveness (she is constantly blowing hot and cold) leave him bewildered, and he drifts helplessly into an impossible situation.

In many ways *Columbine* reads like a first novel, although in fact Kennedy has had two published previously in America. There is often a touch of creative writing-class self-consciousness (the dust-jacket boasts that the author was taught by Ted Hughes at the University of Massachusetts), especially in the early chapters, which contain many lapses of tone. There are a number of irritating repetitions (*Columbine's* *be* is described as being "like porcelain countless times"); laboured allusions (" . . . sentiments, Henry thought, that would have done honour to Thibide, that would have befitted the likes of Isoldé, or even of the incomparable Juliet herself"); and embarrassing periphrases ("he ministered to his own needs and 'he gave gratification to his troubled spirit' both mean that he masturbated"). An identification of Henry as the Huckle Finn to Columbine's Columbine is hinted at, but not developed.

Kennedy is an author, in fact, who impresses most not when he is trying to impress but when he allows his plain, unforced style to work freely. He has a good ear for dialogue, and the minor characters are beautifully drawn — particularly Henry's father, an ignorant, opinionated cop, and the redheaded jock "Sally" Sullivan, whose bizarre taste in clothes is lovingly dwelt on. The novel grows steadily in strength and assurance, and only a weak coda which explains what happened to Henry in later life mars the final effect.

Recent fiction reprints in hardback include Paul Bowles's *The Sheltering Sky*, first published in 1949 (304pp, Peter Owen, £7.95, 0 7206 0587 3), D. E. Charlwood's *All The Green Year*, 1965 (183pp, Angus and Robertson, £6.95, 0 207 14195 9) and R. C. Hutchinson's *Johanna at Daybreak*, 1969, (314pp, Michael Joseph, £6.25, 0 7181 0443 9).

simplicity turns into "something strongly-scented with a sweetness that suggested decay". Gradually, this toxic mixture of sweetness and decay torments and enraptures the more vulnerable character and an imminent and tragic dénouement is foreshadowed.

The pervading atmosphere of fantasy is upheld by the dream-like quality of much of the action, by the sing-song, rather childish idiom through which the events are unfolded, and by the disconcerting array of haunted individuals with their suggestive, semi-alliterated names (Fish, Garnet, Cocklife, Swells, Pearl, Girle and Boy). All serve to create the impression of a distorted, quasi-mythical world where hatred and cruelty dominate and where "monsters of impety" are the norm. Underlying this, however, is a satirical sense of an actual country. It is the conflict between these two worlds and the souls who represent them that frames the ensuing action. Thus, whereas Girle represents the darker of the two states, the visionary, epileptic boy, Tom, provides the greatest threat to the forces of evil. Consequently, his life is endangered; but so are the lives of all who share in his torment, since evil must ultimately prey on itself. "You stuck your pint into your little clay dolly and hated, hated. And all the time evil came closer — to you." Eventually, relief comes from an unexpected quarter and innocence is protected. But any sense of triumph is short-lived since Hanrahan's sense of

history (whether real or mythical) is cyclical. So, Lou (a typical Hanrahan nymph) finally discovers that, despite her individuality, she is her mother's daughter and will go the same blind way; Doll (a prophetic painter) falls once again to succour the prosecuted Cockroach; and even though Girle and her brother, Boy, may die, they are re-incarnated in the forms of the Duke and Duchess of York, whose tour of Australia has furnished a tenuous temporal link between chapters, and who, for all their royal dignity, dance to the same old tunes. Thus, the *conscience* is perpetuating its characters imprisoned in their appointed roles.

All this adds a disconcerting note of hopelessness and sterility to the novel, an irritating lack of direction and purpose. For, despite Ms Hanrahan's obvious ability and confidence as a writer, *The Frangipani Gardens*, like her previous novel *The Peach Groves*, suffers from the limitations of its author's obsessive predilection for the same kind of characters (all monsters or grotesques) and the same kind of motives (dark, primeval instincts and passions). Essentially, this novel seems to be merely a re-write of her last, and indeed the one before that. So, unlike Verlaine's *Fêtes Galantes*, *The Frangipani Gardens* remains rooted in a rather shallow area of imaginative fantasy, and ends on a particularly telling note of nursery-rhyme frivolity and nonsense with a "Hi Diddle Diddle".

TED HUGHES:  
Under the North Star  
Drawings by Leonard Baskin  
47pp, Faber. £5.95.  
0 571 11721 X

TERRY GIFFORD AND NEIL ROBERTS:  
Ted Hughes: A Critical Study  
288pp, Faber. £9.50.  
0 571 11701 5

EKBERT FAAS:

Ted Hughes: The Unaccommodated Universe  
232pp, Santa Barbara: Black Sparrow Press. \$14 (paperback \$7.50).  
0 87685 460 9

STUART HIRSCHBERG:

Myth in the Poetry of Ted Hughes  
239pp, Portlarnock, Co. Dublin: Wallowood Press. £8.50.  
0 905473 50 7

There is a moment in John Cowper Powys's novel, *The Hunchback*, when the natural scientist Roger Bacon contrasts himself, as someone who "in his own spirit was always aware of the presence of an almighty force behind the whole panorama of experience, behind the animal, vegetable and mineral worlds . . ." with his colleague Pierre of Picardy. He reflects that

there was always something . . . that frightened him about his friend's attitude, for it struck him as reducing not only his own life, as he knew it himself, but the lives of all other entities as they knew them themselves, the lives of insects, such as midges and moths, the lives of plants and trees, the lives of worms and serpents, the lives of fish in the sea, birds in the air, the lives of the beasts of the forest and field; reducing in fact all these lives to the level of loneliness, desperate, lost souls, clinging to each other in a boundless, godless, cavernous nothingness . . .

It is one of many passages in the novels in which Cowper Powys registers a profound historical shift of consciousness, from a religious to a scientific world view. The world of Friar Bacon's worst imaginings is strikingly similar to the imaginative universe that Ted Hughes first defined in "Pibroch" and has inhabited ever since:

Over the stone rushes the wind  
Able to mingle with nothing,  
Like the hearing of the blind stone  
 . . . itself.  
Or turns, as if the stone's mind came  
feeling  
A fantasy of directions.

Drinking the sea and eating the rock  
A real struggles to make leaves —  
An old woman fallen from space  
Unprepared for these conditions.  
She hangs on, because her mind's gone  
completely.

The difference is that Ted Hughes is writing on this side of that historical shift. He is a poet of evolution, concerned to articulate and make habitable a post-Darwinian universe.

Such profound changes take generations to work through to acceptance; and the new forms of thought never entirely displace the old. Hughes is only just this side of the imaginative divide. The terror of the situation is still upon him, freshly to be confronted in poem after poem. So in his new collection, *Under the North Star*, "The Musk-Ox" finds that

The stars are no company.  
They huddle at the bottom of their azeos,  
 . . . only just existing.

Jostled by every gust,  
Pinned precariously to their flutters of  
 . . . light.

Tense and weightless, ready to be  
snatched away into some other infinity.

And the broken tree-dwarves in their  
hollow, near him,  
Have no energy for friendship, no words  
to spare.

Just hanging on, not daring to blink of the  
sucking, and bottomless emptiness of the  
blast  
That grabs at their nape, and pounds their  
shoulders.

This is a wasteland. But here again  
there is a difference of generation.

## Desolation and development

By Roger Garfitt

Whereas Yeats and Eliot and David Jones all lamented, in their different ways, the breakdown of an imaginative order, Hughes takes that breakdown for granted. As he implied in his 1971 *London Magazine* interview, it is the foundation of his vision:

What Eliot and Joyce and I suppose Beckett are portraying is the state of belonging spiritually to the last phase of Christian civilisation, they suffer its disintegration. But there are now quite a few writers about who do not seem to belong spiritually to the Christian civilisation at all. In their world Christianity is just another provisional myth of man's relationship with the creator and the world of spirit.

Or, to put it another way, it is "on a heathery moor" beside "a roofless church", in a setting very reminiscent of Eliot's "empty chapel . . . in this decayed hole among the mountains" that the protagonist of *Cave Birds* finds his weapons. A wasteland is what the imagination has to work with. The landscape of "Pibroch" is "neither a bad variant nor a trout." This is where the staring angels go through. This is where all the stars bow down.

Such a universe will never be easy to inhabit; but in Hughes's work it is convincingly inhabited by many different orders of creation, from the transformed hero of *Cave Birds*, whose odyssey of death and rebirth culminates in an experience of "lightness beyond lightness releasing me further", to the undemanding Musk-Ox of *Under the North Star*, whose stasis in a bleak universe is his strength:

He's happy.  
Bowed beneath his snowed-under lean-  
to of horns.  
Hunched over his nostrils, singing to  
himself.  
Happy inside there, bent at his hearth-  
glow

Over the simple picture book  
Of himself  
As he was yesterday, as he will be  
tomorrow . . .

*Under the North Star* is itself "a simple picture book", originally conceived as an entertainment for a child. No new energies are released

here, of the kind that made *Season Songs* a small watershed in Hughes's development. For the English reader, who has hitherto known Leonard Baskin's work only in black and white, the subtle, luminous colours of the drawings are likely to be the book's major discovery. But as "The Musk-Ox" shows, even these minor poems proceed from a central, controlling vision. The poem's affection is married to its perception. It is only, *pace* Roger Bacon, the coldness of the one that makes possible the warmth of the other.

Terry Gifford and Neil Roberts make the point, in their excellent new critical study of Ted Hughes, that "for Ted Hughes the vocation of being a poet is bound up with the subject-matter of his poetry in a way that can only be paralleled in a devotional poet". Once the relevance of his vision is grasped, the animal poems are seen to be rather more than animal poems: "For him the animal is not merely an analogue or emblem of the inner self but a part, with that self, of an indivisible whole." The chief limitation of their vision is that they do not see Hughes's vision in its historical context, and therefore convey no sense of the pressure under which that vision has been formed. As a result, Hughes's concerns are made to seem rather more abstract than they are. At one point in their discussion of *Crow*, for instance, they suggest that "the psychological need for man to people the universe with his own conceptions is parodied with acute perception."

In "Owl's Song" owl rejects fictions about material reality, but then hears himself imposing on the universe his own "clawtrack of star" and "wingbeat of rock". That is accurate, as far as it goes. What is missing is the dimension of terror which is also, ultimately, the source of wonder. For the landscape of "Owl's Song" is essentially the landscape of "Pibroch":

The air gave up appearances  
Water went deliberately numb  
The rock surrendered its last hope  
And cold died beyond knowledge  
The moment on which the poem  
pivots is owl's hearing his own song  
start up out of that landscape:

He sang  
How everything had nothing more to  
 . . . love  
Then sat still with fear  
Seeing the clawtrack of star  
Hearing the wingbeat of rock  
And his own singing

His song terrifies him, as an ineluctable, even predatory force. But it is a wonder that it should exist at all. It binds him to continuance, and that is affirmative. The terror and the affirmation are one.

Similarly, in their discussion of *Remains of Elmet*, Gifford and Roberts do not quite catch the evolutionary rigour of Hughes's perspective, though they come close to it in writing of a "densely suggestive language that can relate social to natural processes in the timescale of a landscape". They miss completely what one might call the positive desolation of poems like "These Grasses of Light" in which the landscape becomes "The armour of brie-a-brue/To which your soul's caddis/Clings with all its courage". Consequently they are not able to place the "adventure" of poems like "Hill Walls". For the only time in two hundred and eighty pages, they have recourse to a vague phrase, writing of "a sense of exhilaration that is the living spirit of the book." What they have failed to establish is the frame of reference which could identify that exhilaration as the soul's courage, its terror overcome.

Desolation is a keynote that has to be struck in any proper discussion of Hughes. But it is no more than a keynote; there is also the crucial matter of development. The great value of this new study is that Gifford and Roberts firmly establish the positive nature of Hughes's development, within carefully drawn limits. That is no easy task, because, again for historical reasons, the positive side of Hughes's imagination is also the more obscure, or rather the more occult. The desolation, the soul's rude awakening to "a boundless, godless, cavernous nothingness" is thoroughly Western, and very much of this century. The other

side of Hughes's imagination, his perception that, as Gifford and Roberts express it, "the world of spirit and the material world are the same", comes much closer to the vision of primitive religion. Hence Hughes's interest in shamanism, in *The Golden Bough* and *The White Goddess*, in the Egyptian and the Tibetan Books of the Dead, in hermetic and alchemical texts.

Little of this enters the poems as direct reference — Hughes has always eschewed what he calls "scholarly pedantic baggage". But it does influence the way the poetry works. It is useful, for instance, in understanding the hero's encounter with the illusory heaven of "A green mother" in *Cave Birds*, to recall, as Gifford and Roberts do, "the repeated warnings in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* that the various deities encountered in the Bardo state are illusions created out of the dead person's 'thought-forms'." This illusion, in other words, "offers us a redemption a return to the state of complicity with which he started." Or again, the resolution of *Cave Birds* in "Bride and groom lie hidden for three days" can be appreciated without any outside reference; but it enriches one's understanding to take a hint from the subtitle, "in alchemical cave drama", and to see the poem in terms of Jung's writings on alchemy as the transformed hero's marriage with his *gnor mystica*, his integration with his other self.

Gifford and Roberts have followed Keith Sagar's example in reading widely so as to illuminate Hughes's work. They have avoided the temptation, to which Ekbert Faas falls prey, of becoming Hughes's exegetes rather than his critics. They develop an argument which highlights the weaknesses as well as the strengths of *Crow* and *Gaudeite*, and which proposes, rightly in my view, that *Cave Birds* is his most substantial achievement to date. Similarly, they use to good effect their reading of Hughes's limited editions and uncollected poems, and are not afraid to take issue with his editing of his own work.

"Adam and the Sacred Nine", for instance, is published in *Moortown* as a sequence of twelve poems. The original Rainbow Press edition included five additional poems which "had a narrative function and elaborated on Adam's state". Gifford and Roberts mount a strong case for retaining at least two of these, the two which immediately preceded the final poem. The first of them ends

Light smiled  
And smiled and smiled  
Eyes  
Darkened  
Afraid suddenly  
That this was all there was to it.

Gifford and Roberts point out that "the last line is important for an understanding of Adam's eventual achievement. When, at the end of the sequence, he says to the rock, 'I was made/For you', he is doing no more than accepting that 'this was all there was to it.' If there is any redemption or transcendence in the final poem it must be of a kind that can be resisted in the terms of that line." Their suggestion would, in other words, bring into balance the two halves of Hughes's imagination, his modern, existential awareness of the "boundless, godless, cavernous nothingness" and his recovery of the ancient, religious sense of the universe. It is constructive criticism of this kind that makes the new study by Gifford and Roberts essential reading for anyone seriously interested in the work of Ted Hughes.

Criticism is a discipline that seems to hold little appeal for Ekbert Faas and Stuart Hirschberg. They prefer to rest on biographical and psycho-analytical speculation, as if that absolved them from any further exploration of the poems. They seem drawn, not so much by myth in Ted Hughes, as by the myth of Ted Hughes.

Peter Redgrove

This is a pity, because Faas's book is promising in outline. He does, for instance, offer a historical perspective, although when he cites Hughes as being alone among contemporary

## The City of Oil

Dedicated to the earth-semen  
Under the sea, the black dragon  
Of energy, slithering through,

They memorialise in their festival, the dragon  
Of the town, the Civic Snap, into which  
The folk join like segments

Of the annelid and dance a segment dance  
Through the winding streets creating the worm  
That slippery produces of the earth may gush

Wholeheartedly for ever. Through the streets  
The dark blood-oil in its barrels of skin  
Distils, oil of people, glittering in the moon:

The mayor's daughter dances in the head  
Of papier-mâché luminous with green earth-fire,  
The rest of the slithered dancers flow after

Slithering over the stones like droplets  
Splashing into a torrent which roars  
With the dragon-song under the lanterns filled with oil

Semen est verbum dei that is on fire  
With ancient energy and the beat of the seasons,  
The dancers in their tight and red-black sashes

As though dipped in oil and now the Snap  
Clambers through the rigs like Christmas trees  
That light up with the touch of a switch

That starts the pumps up that drown the dancers' drum  
Beating the rhythm of the earth pouring out  
Its liquid dragon-rock in smooth sashes.



English poets in his "departure from the mainstream Western tradition" one can only assume that he is unfamiliar with the work of Peter Redgrove. Faas prints an appendix a selection from his forthcoming edition of Hughes's critical writings: the problem is that the appendix makes for better reading than the book. Faas's text is often no more than a thread drawn hastily through too many quotations. In the course of these rapid summaries Faas tends to become glib, thereby devaluing Hughes's currency.

There is one point, right at the end of the book, when Faas takes a hint from a conversation with Hughes and follows it up. The result is a useful exploration of the relationship between the South Indian *vacanas*, which Hughes had been reading in A. K. Ramanujan's translation, and the lyrics of the Epilogue to *Gaude*. If only Faas had ventured more often on his own account, he might have written a much better book. His two interviews with Hughes (the first published in the *London Magazine* in January 1971, and both now printed as a second appendix here) are of unusual interest, and his edition of Hughes's critical writings will be invaluable. The sadness is that once that edition is out, his own book will cease to be of any value.

Stuart Hirschberg has assembled from every quarter — mythology, psychoanalysis, the science of animal behaviour — a mass of information of which he is hardly in control. His notions of animal behaviour are either mistaken — vultures, he informs us, are the only birds that make use of thermals — or misapplied: "the picture of motionless crows grouped in trees in communal roosting patterns", he pronounces in an astounding *non sequitur*, "emphasises the intellectual sterility of Crow's endeavour".

On myth, his avowed theme, he is not so much a guide as a computer print-out of every conceivable reference. He does not stop to examine whether his references point in the same direction as Hughes's poem. To the final image of "Prometheus On His Crag", for instance —

And Prometheus eyes free.  
He sways to his stature.  
And hunches. And treads

On the dusty peacock film where the world floats.

— he adduces, in rapid succession, the proverb "proud as a peacock", the story of Argus and Io, the peacock as an image of cyclic renewal, and various fables where the crow disguises itself as a peacock. So Prometheus "sublimates his pride by treading it underfoot and achieves renewal, though only as 'part of a larger cyclic transformation from Crow through disguised Crow back

to Crow again". All of which ignores the image itself, which is, surely, primarily a visual image, of oil floating on water, and so an image of instability, transience, illusion, with suggestions of the veil of appearances, the solipsism of the seeing eye. It may well be that Hughes is taking a traditional image of renewal — Hirschberg might also have adduced, from his alchemical section, the appearance of the rainbow colours, called the peacock's tail, in the alchemical vessel, which marked "self-becoming" — and totally recasting it to suggest the fragile and illusory nature of that renewal. That would be characteristic. In which case Hirschberg should have used his references to highlight Hughes's individual treatment. Whereas in fact he has not even noticed it: he prints these lines without their linebreak, thereby destroying the verse movement and what that movement enacts, the uncertainty of Prometheus's step and the instability of the "ground" beneath his feet.

Hirschberg is rather more apposite on the hermetic and alchemical background. It is useful, for instance, to know that "the dark night of the soul" through which the alchemist had to pass began with a stage known as *caput corvi*, crow's head or raven's head. This illuminates *Crow*, and also *Cave Birds*, where the hen, after sentence, is swallowed by a raven. Or again, in their discussion of *Cave Birds* Gifford and Roberts are unable to see the point of the "Bride and groom" being placed "Like two gods of mud/Sprawling in the dirt": they might have seen the point that they know that "lying in the mud" is an equivalent stage in the Orphic cult. Hirschberg quotes one of the Orphic hymns in which the initiate feels as if his brightenedness has caused him to be "shut up in a cave... I am likened to the black raven, for that is the wages of sin; in dust and earth I lie."

Gifford and Roberts are clearly more at ease with Hughes's absorption in the material world than with his interest in the world of spirit. In this respect they are subject to the limitations of their time, and in this one respect Faas and Hirschberg do retain a certain usefulness. They are rather like the scholars of a classical text: they can be unreliable, even misleading, but they do give glimpses of material not generally available to the modern reader. What Hirschberg really should have done, and might still care to do, is simply present a Companion to the poetry of Ted Hughes, a selection of plain texts drawn from folklore, myth and the occult, that would enable the reader to establish his own relations between Ted Hughes's sources and what he has been able to "make new" in the poems.

## Taking no chances

By Douglas Dunn

The Gregory Awards 1980  
Poems selected by Peter Porter and Howard Sergeant  
56pp. Secker and Warburg, £4.50.  
0 436 37812 4

The Gregory Trust, from which the annual Gregory Awards are made, states that its beneficiaries must be British and under 30. Over the years about £50,000 has been awarded to about a hundred young writers, and there was a time when a Gregory Award seemed to precede a first collection of poems almost as a matter of course.

Although the Trust Deed allows for a volume of belated letters to be considered, poetry or poets is the primary concern of the committee which distributes E. C. Gregory's generous bequest. I cannot remember a single instance of a book or manuscript of literary essays benefiting from the deliberations of the adjudicating panel, a fact which I find distinctly heartening. In any case, Mr Gregory wished that "no award should be made on the strength of a work which is merely the exposition of religious, scientific or political views." He was either supremely disinterested or he wanted us to think so.

A Gregory Award can have the effect of lifting a young poet from the ruck of the little magazines, making him or her that bit more visible in the literary world in general. It therefore makes good sense that there should be an anthology every few years of poems by winners of awards. Just how accurately such a gathering of new talent will predict the near future of poetry is, however, uncertain.

Last year's winners were Michael Hulke, Medbh McGuckian, Robert Macinnick and Blake Morrison. Their poems, though extensively represented in the book, which leaves room for one or two poems by eighteen others. Nothing actually blazes off the page, while there is a fair proportion of banality and stylistic clumsiness to offset against signs of freshness, originality and neatness of expression.

Absence of real surprise is dispiriting enough. More alarming still is a prevailing lack of ambition or scale and of imaginative making — a subjective honesty seems to have taken their place as the first requirement of a poem. If one aspect of poetry is conspicuously lacking at the present time it is a willingness to take formal pleasure in very old-fashioned devices, to the line of the average and unexpected. From the evidence of this otherwise interesting anthology, that new expressive courage appears to remain on the other side of the horizon.

## The bard of Briggflatts

By Fleur Adcock

CARROLL F. TERRELL (Editor):  
Basil Bunting: Man and Poet  
427pp. Maine: National Poetry Foundation. \$25.  
0 915032 51 1

Basil Bunting once said "There is no excuse for literary criticism"; these words are quoted, usually with nervous jocularity, by several contributors to this volume. It does not consist entirely of literary criticism: there is a leaning of biography, another activity frowned upon by Bunting ("My autobiography is Briggflatts — there's nothing else worth speaking about"), and also some short extracts from his own prose writings and from two bibliographies. But for the most part the homage offered to the poet by this somewhat mixed gathering of admirers is in the form of analyses of his work.

Bunting was eighty last year, and his birthday was celebrated in this country by readings, television programmes and a festival in his honour at the University of Warwick. The publication of his *Collected Poems* by Oxford University Press in 1978 brought him back to the notice of his own countrymen (a process which had already begun with his "rediscovery" by Tom Pickard in the 1960s), but the reputation of "the only card-carrying English Poundian" as Donald Davis had called him, was for many years kept alive on the other side of the Atlantic. Recently his work has also been seriously examined in this country, and not only by Americanists such as Eric Mottram: *Agenda* has devoted attention to Bunting, and he has a strong following in his native North East England, as is proper. The present collection of essays is of predominantly American authorship, but includes a substantial British element.

The book follows the pattern of a similar volume on Pound's other disciple, Louis Zukofsky, published in 1979, and was conceived and produced in uncomfortable haste. (Why? The birthday is well past, and no other particular occasion looms.) Carroll F. Terrell's chatty and at times incoherent preface refers to the initial desire, and continues hopefully to the writers here: "the work of the writers here speaks for itself, but does not show the deadlines many of them met which cannot be described as indulgent". Perhaps not: the clearest signs of agitation appear in the prose of Terrell's own Introduction, which scuttles frantically from one tired metaphor to the next, sometimes tripping over several together: "It takes time, as does a fine wine, for the poet's acknowledged land to be developed in crisp and unadorned lines". But possibly he writes like this even at leisure.

The tone of the actual contributions to the book is for the most part more controlled, partly because some of the pieces were already in existence: there are two articles from the 1978 Bunting issue of *Poetry Information*, two extracts from a thesis, and an enlarged version of an essay by Hugh Kenner from *Poetry*; and some of the other contributions incorporate or rely upon work which had already been done. Nothing is included from the special issue of *Agenda* devoted to Bunting in 1978, but its contents are listed and summarized in the second bibliography.

The book begins with a section on "The Man" (as distinct from "The Poet", "The Thinker", and "The Translator"). The life about which Bunting professes such reluctance to write is, in fact, a varied one: a Quaker background; imprisonment as a conscientious objector; a job as a music critic; a spell in Paris in the 1920s helping Ford Madox Ford on the *Transatlantic Review*, among other things; friendship with Pound; several years in Italy, at Rapallo, and year or two in the Canary Islands; some experience of sailing various kinds of boat; war service in Iran on the basis of the classical Persian Bunting had taught himself in order

to read Firdusi; an appointment as Vice-Consul in Isfahan, and later the post of Chief of Political Intelligence; and then years of drudgery for the *New York Evening Chronicle*, which enabled the poet to support his wife and children but deadened his creative impulse, until his "resurrection" in the 1960s.

Terrell has patched together a narrative of these events in what he calls an "eccentric biography". It is based on several not entirely compatible sources, including Bunting's conversation with Jonathan Williams published in 1968 as *Descent on Rawlley's Madrigal*; long extracts from this are stitched in between passages of paraphrase and conjecture, using such expressions as "we can deduce what happened" and "the evidence suggests" and "probably". In view of Bunting's hostility to investigations of his private life, and the smokescreen he has thrown up around it, it would possibly have been better simply to reprint the Jonathan Williams interview, which at least had his grudging cooperation.

The sketch of "The Man" is continued by a lively and sensible piece by Hugh Kenner, part reminiscence and part insight into the work, and a brief burst of homage from Theodore Enslin; and then attention passes to the poetry. The centrepiece of this section is a "Symposium" on *Briggflatts*, Bunting's major work and the one without which, in spite of his earlier achievements, he might indeed have remained in a literary limbo. Like his earlier long poems, which he called "Sonatas", its basic structure is that of a musical composition, and he has constantly stressed the importance of this element in his work. (In his own reading of *Briggflatts*, recently issued on a record by Bloodaxe Books, Scarlatti's sonata in B minor played as an accompaniment to the recitation of the poem.) But its verbal content, notwithstanding Bunting's teasing assertion that the "attempt to find any meaning in it would be manifestly absurd", repays close attention. *Briggflatts* is not an easy poem — it is condensed, allusive, and occasionally seems almost as deliberately puzzling as its author's public utterances about it. It is not merely a texture of interesting tonal effects. L. S. Dembo, in an essay whose initial stance is to argue against Peter Dole's rather unpleasant *Agenda* article, "Basil Bunting: School of Poetry", analyses aspects of both subject-matter and sound-patterns in *Briggflatts* and puts a convincing case for the poem's carefully integrated unity of theme. M. L. Rosenthal is equally illuminating, but less polemical.

Donald Davis aims his fire at Michael Schmidt, who in a hasty reading of *Briggflatts* "misreads 'Rawlley' for the name of the bull with which the poem opens, and listed the qualities embodied in this actually anonymous animal; Davis advises him and English readers not to hunt for symbols but to approach the poem without prior assumptions. This sermon is directed at the same category of sinners as Davis's earlier article "English and American in *Briggflatts*", but says rather different things, and as we might expect, says them well. John Peck, on the other hand, writes in support of the poem's American (about the influence of the heroic sagas, as far as one can gather); and Anthony Suter repeats points made in his other writings on Bunting.

Outside the "Symposium" *Briggflatts* receives attention in several more general articles. David M. Gordon's "The Structure of Bunting's Sonatas" is somewhat given to musical technicalities and to hypotheses — "would have", "seems to"; it discusses *Briggflatts* in the light of Bunting's diagrammatic representation of its form as a small range of Peter Quartmain analyses rhythms and patterns of vowels in Whitman, Pound and Bunting, showing how much harder the mouth of the speaker has to work in the latter, "moving around all those vowels, voicing all those consonants". This is indeed one of the most remarkable features

of Bunting's verse, which needs to be read aloud in something approaching his own carefully deliberate manner. "Music" in his poetry does not mean mellifluousness, as Hugh Kenner reminds us in his analysis of a few densely-packed lines.

Bunting has called his shorter poems "Odes" — a word which implies musical connections once again. The only sustained consideration of them here is in the first of two extracts from a thesis entitled *Music and Meaning in the Poetry of Basil Bunting*, by Sister Victoria Marie Forde, SC. This is a workmanlike study, making use of a wide range of sources, and as an introduction to the Odes the chapter is helpful, but it is little more than an introduction (it extended quotations make it look longer than it is), and only one poem, "Vestiges", is discussed in depth. Certainly some of these shorter pieces are apprentice work, too slight or derivative to merit weighty examination, but there are also some fine and durable poems among them, which deserve fuller treatment.

A few of the Odes are in fact translations, and Sister Forde discusses these in the second extract from her thesis. Like Pound, Bunting saw translation as one of the chief activities by which a poet learnt his craft. His scholarship is genuine, and although the translations he has preserved are few (they fill only twenty pages of the *Collected Poems*) their stylistic range is impressive. They include a fine, spare version of Horace's *Eheu fugaces*, a number of translations from the Persian, a language in which he is very much at home, and some adaptations from the Italian — among which can be included the long poem *Chomel at Toyama*, based on an Italian translation of a twelfth century Japanese prose work. Sister Forde examines them all, giving particular attention to *Chomel at Toyama*, which she places high among his work. She displays an informed understanding of what is involved in the translation of Latin poetry, particularly that of Horace, and is perceptive about sound-values and metres. Of the Persian translations she finds one (from Manuichehr) imperfectly successful because of its strict adherence to the original. Farvin Loloi and Glyn Furgate, however, in an article reprinted from *Poetry Information*, see this meticulous fidelity to his Persian sources as the result of Bunting's desire to bring an unfamiliar literature clearly before English readers, whereas with Latin he can afford to be more free.

The rest of the book is given over to "The Thinker" and "The Testament", as if a saint or the founder of a sect were being honoured. Under the first of these rubrics fall two selections, by Dale Reagan and William S. Milne, of "Obliter dicta" from Bunting's own prose writings, lectures, interviews and letters. The extracts from his criticism illuminate his own poetic practice and assign credit to his masters — Villon, Malherbe, Wordsworth, Homer, Dante, the Persian poets Firdusi and Manuichehr.

"The Testament" consists in fact of two bibliographies, one by Dana Wilde of works by Bunting himself, and another by Roger Guedalla, as the introduction to the book confesses, although this fact is not mentioned at the head of the bibliography itself, and one of works about Bunting, with summaries of the more important articles. This is by one of Terrell's graduate students, with a little suitably acknowledged help from here and there; it is by no means comprehensive (it does not include book reviews, although poems addressed to Bunting are solemnly listed), and the criteria for inclusion are not defined; but the fairly lengthy annotations are useful.

There was room for a comprehensive critical study of Bunting, but this patchy compilation is not it. Perhaps someone with more time than Terrell seems to have been able to spare, and slightly more discretion, will be inspired to do better.

## Demonstrations of versatility

By Frances Spalding

MARCO LIVINGSTONE:  
David Hockney  
215pp. with 185 illustrations 36 in colour. Thames and Hudson. £7.95. (paperback, £3.95)  
0 500 181853

Beneath the glamour and promotion associated with David Hockney's name is a driven worker with a capricious imagination whom few critics have treated seriously. The lack of critical literature on the artist, who has been working now for twenty-five years, is indicative of the art world's distrust of popular appeal. To be a commercial success and accessible runs counter to concepts of the avant-garde. There is also the suspicion that the light cannot be profound. It is ironic that only now, when the iconoclastic misfit has turned establishment guru, is he being objectively rated.

Marco Livingstone's book fills a similar role to that of John Berger's *Success and Failure of Picasso*; it exposes weakness as well as strength, and will help stem excessive eulogy. His impartiality is impressive and must have involved skilful diplomacy, for in a monograph on a living artist the author is necessarily dependent on his subject's goodwill. Outspoken criticism is combined with keen appreciation and a grasp of the art-historical allusions culled by Hockney from various periods and cultures. Marco Livingstone never pushes his analogies too far, except when unlikely precedents for the portly Henry Geldzahler are found in the Madonna enthroned and in Jacques-Louis David's "Madame Récamier". He rarely questions the underlying ideology in Hockney's art, but it is not so strictly formalist as to avoid discussion of its human content. He brings Hockney's career up to date, and throughout combines subtlety and precision of statement with the ease and clarity that the series demands, making this a monograph of value to layman and art audience alike.

If Hockney's image has begun to lose its sheen, his fascination has increased because the problems that he tackles have become more real. His central weakness is the one which Berger pinpointed as Picasso's: he cannot always find a subject to match in strength his versatility and skill. Picasso's 1960 Tate Gallery exhibition acted as a major liberating force. It showed Hockney that style was a thing to be chosen at will, according to the needs of the subject. Two years later, when showing four works in a *Young Contemporaries* exhibition, he chose as a generic title one that applies to his whole career — "Demonstrations of Versatility". As with Picasso, this

talent has encouraged experiment but has occasionally become unhooked, making its own motions its subject. Discussing his tendency to fall back on naturalism, Hockney confessed to Peter Fuller, "I obviously have just terrible weaknesses as an artist". This recent cracking of his glib panache has revealed more doubts and hesitations than the suspiciously ingenious autobiography, assembled from taped conversations in 1975, suggested. We now learn that throughout the greater part of the 1970s Hockney suffered from painting "blocks". Despite his readiness to expose his private life in book, paint and film, he has produced few self-portraits. He argues that if he looks at himself too closely, the innocence on which much of the charm of his vision depends will disappear.

The autobiography told the reader just what Hockney wanted known about his paintings. Marco Livingstone is able to add still more information regarding source material and production, but his most important new contribution is his detailed examination of Hockney's theatrical designs which, since 1974, have been a significant aspect of his work. Having earlier criticized certain early 1970s paintings for being emotionally and intellectually shallow, Livingstone admits the fresh challenge presented by the more ephemeral art of the theatre but does not draw out the conclusion that artifice provided Hockney with a welcome and safer avenue.

Looking at the designs for *The Rake's Progress*, it is tempting to draw a parallel between the rake's gradual dissolution and Hockney's development. The most exciting images in this book — those still buoyant, owing to their quirky originality, cheeky humour and throw-away style — are the paintings produced at the Royal College and immediately after. "In those days I didn't talk much" says the man who recently reduced Bernard Levin to silence in an interview. Instead, he buried furtive messages in canvases that make an agonized exploration of his homosexuality. He now admits that he would like to recapture their sense of urgency. His various experiments with medium and style look increasingly like a search for spontaneity, for an apparent freedom in his early work when in fact freedom was the one thing he had not got. Soon after he "came out" he seems temporarily to have lacked a subject. He played with modernism, filling his canvases with pictorial devices and conceits. Only his wit, Marco Livingstone argues, saves the pictures from becoming drily pedagogic.

Unlike the rake, he was undone not by extravagance and sexual excess, but by a penchant for travel and for the camera. His move to California resulted in images of sun, affluence and leisure, with which his name will for long be associated. Already these have a period look. They often disappoint in

actuality but reproduce well, because colour reproductions return them to the medium from which they were composed, with detail reduced and crisper presentation. The wit and tension in the portraits depends on his compositional acuity and clever placing of the figures. Often, however, likeness and setting suffer from inattention, as becomes evident if the "Christophers Isherwood and Don Bachardy" is compared with the photographs, here reproduced, of the two men and the room in which they were sitting. Yet Hockney could easily have become the John Singer Sargent of the 1970s had he not, except in one instance, refused to paint commissioned portraits.

The camera, he has admitted, led him into naturalism and to the impasse this eventually presented. But this difficulty was surely compounded with a sense of rootlessness. His misfortune was now his freedom, his ability to go where he wished. For all their modish elegance, his drawings done in hotel bedrooms convey vacuity, as well as loneliness and isolation. Moving to Paris in 1973 for two years, he was confronted with the work of major French artists and must have reflected still more on his own limitations. In Picasso's breadth and generosity he found an indictment of the self-imposed narrowness of much contemporary art. Confirmed in his demand for a more humanistic approach than modernism allowed, he made a bold stand with Kitaj in *The New Review*, calling for a return to a figurative art filled out in "memorable and generous terms". Yet the large painting he began after this and worked on for two years, his "Santa Monica Boulevard", he recently destroyed.

Like Ingres, Hockney may come to be admired chiefly for his portraits and drawings. Both author and artist agree that the outline drawings done in pen and ink are Hockney's greatest achievement. His line is brittle yet tender, exploratory yet affirmative, conveying with extreme economy the maximum of information. They are also intensely felt, unlike certain of the coloured crayon drawings. In Paul Hellen, in which Marco Livingstone discovers "an irritating air of self-congratulation". A similar facility seems to mar his recent "Canyon" paintings which were the subject of conflicting opinion when they were exhibited in *A New Spirit in Painting* at the Royal Academy (Commentary, January 23). Livingstone praises those and other of Hockney's recent works, finding in his new canvases on themes of music and dance a liberating eclecticism that makes them the logical successors to his Royal College paintings. Hockney himself is convinced these represent the start of the most productive and inventive period in his career. This from the man who in 1977 admitted, "But I have not been successful at all yet: not even a glimmer".

## Pagan, problematical

By Jean Wilson

ROBERT B. PARTLOW and HARRY T. MOORE (Editors):

D. H. Lawrence: *The Man Who Lived Papers Delivered at the D. H. Lawrence Conference at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, April 1979*  
302pp. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.  
0 8093 0981 5

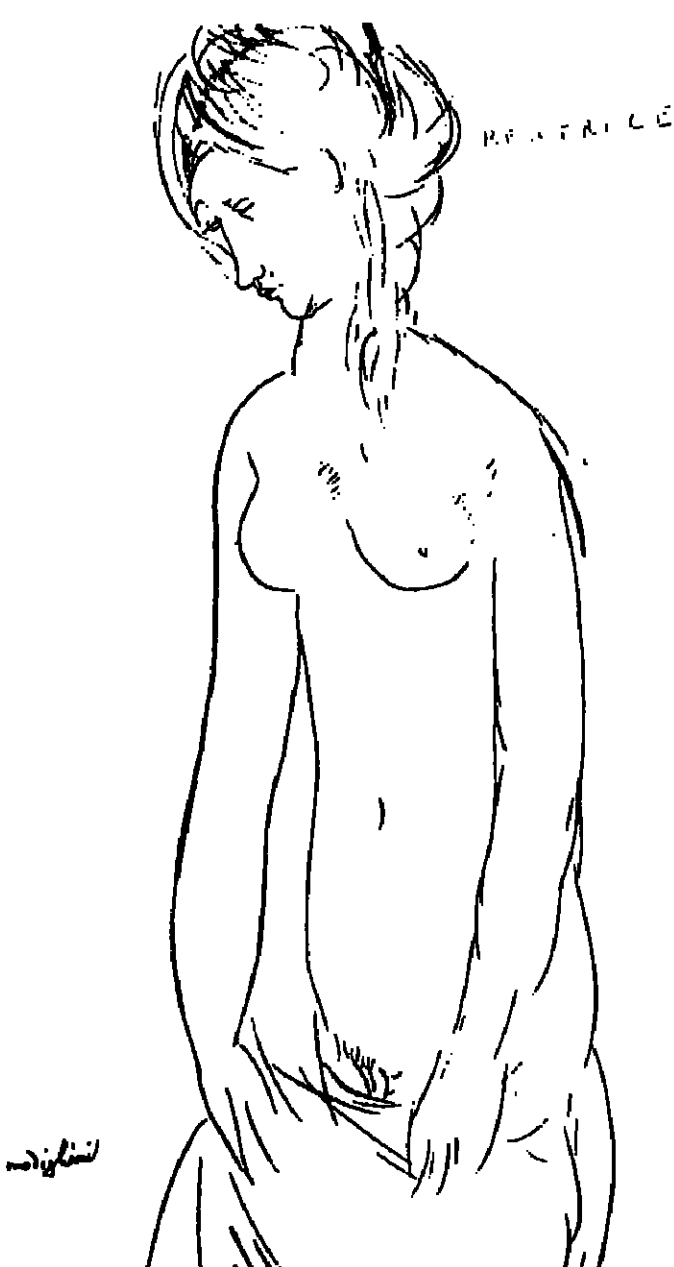
These twenty-seven essays honouring Harry T. Moore are variable in quality, but the best are a valuable contribution to Lawrence studies. There is too heavy a concentration on *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and while I am sure readers are delighted that Professor Moore's biography of Lawrence is being made into "a major motion picture", but is an academic book the place to announce it (twice)?

The most interesting papers are those relating to the new Cambridge University Press edition of the complete works. Lawrence's "literary executor", Gerald Pollinger, offers a fascinating exposition of the status of Lawrence's estate. Some notion of Mr Pollinger's expertise as a literary agent may be gathered from the fact that his definitive edition is to be regarded as under new copyright, thus ensuring a further fifty years' income for Law-

rence's heirs. Michael H. Black details the difficulties, principles and practices involved in establishing the text, and Michael Squires particularizes the problems to be faced and detective work needed in dealing with *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Of the critical papers Keith Cushman's claim that the stories in *England, My England* are all examples of "revisionary mythmaking", with their bases in classical mythology, is interesting, and Sandra M. Gilbert is fresh, lively and controversial in her attempt to define the fundamental paganism of Lawrence's poems, while James C. Cowan writes of Lawrence's use of the Christian mystery of resurrection as a symbol for the liberalization of his characters into sensuality. The three other good papers are all devoted to *Women in Love*: Charles L. Ross's careful examination of the development of Lawrence's treatment of homoerotic feeling through the various drafts of the novel; Lydia Blanchard on brotherhood and sisterhood, balancing both male and female "chauvinist" views of the work; and Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teusmann on the use of the myth of Eros and Psyche.

The lack of a unifying theme rather detracts from the book's value, and in the tributes being paid (rightly) to the work of Professor Moore, it is a pity that only the last contributor finds space to mention F. R. Leavis's championship of Lawrence.



A charcoal drawing (1915) by Modigliani of Beatrice Hastings. Poet and critic, socialist feminist, militant anti-suffragette, Beatrice, the South African-born daughter of a prosperous businessman, is reputed to have married a boxer called Hastings before becoming the mistress of Alfred O'Grady, whom she helped to edit *The New Age*, and the friend of Katherine Mansfield who she was later to cruelly dismiss as having "uttered her way out of a world she had fouled". In 1914 she began a tempestuous affair with Modigliani who made a number of studies of "in *podeesse anglaise*". Mordant of flesh as well as wit, Beatrice soon equalled the drink and drug-inspired physical aggression of the painter. She killed herself in Worthing in 1943. This drawing is taken from Modigliani by Bernard Zurcher (£3.95, 0 413 47690 1) which is included in series of *Methuen paperback books on art* which have been translated from the French. Other volumes (all at £3.95) are Toulouse-Lautrec by Joseph-Emile Muller (0 413 48220 0), Van Gogh by Frank Elgar (0 413 48240 5), Rousseau by Frank Elgar (0 413 48230 4) and Modern Painting by Joseph-Emile Muller and Frank Elgar (0 413 48230 8).

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# Intellectualizing the popular

By Roderick Beaton

GAIL HOLST:

Theodorakis  
Myth and Politics in Modern Greek Music  
262pp. Amsterdam: Hakert.  
90 256 0795 0

*Theodorakis: Myth and Politics in Modern Greek Music* begins with the suggestion that Theodorakis may be "one of the most important figures of twentieth-century music" an assessment which is perhaps wisely not repeated in the book's conclusion. The comparison with Bartok and Stravinsky which this judgment immediately implies, and which is often made explicit in the book, is both invidious and inappropriate. For all their absorption of the native rhythms and tonalities of an "exotic" folk music, Bartok and Stravinsky worked within the tradition of Western European art ("classical") music, and it is in terms of that tradition and its development that they have an evident importance today. Theodorakis early in his career chose to turn his back on that tradition, preferring to enrich the non-Western musical tradition of his country with something of what he had learned at the Paris Conservatoire, but much more with his enormous and spontaneous gift for melody.

For historical reasons Greeks have never either assimilated the "classical" musical tradition of the West nor developed an alternative "classical" music of their own. But the Greek musical tradition has many strands and great richness, encompassing the music of the Orthodox Church in Greece, a wide variety of regional folk music, as well as an urban folk tradition in which Western and Middle East influences create a unique mixture. All Greek music is essentially "popular" - but it is often of far greater quality and complexity than the popular music of the West, where music has become polarized into "popular" and "art" traditions.

There are good grounds for claiming Theodorakis, along with other talented Greek melodists of the 1960s and early 1970s, as "classics" of Greek music. The "new wave", as it was called in Greek, which began in Greek music around 1960 was a remarkable phenomenon. What Theodorakis himself, in a foreword to Gail Holst's book, calls "intellectual popular music" emerged almost from nowhere, linking without pretentiousness or triviality the verses of poets who were later Nobel prize-winners, with popular music often of great beauty and subtlety, and almost incidentally bestowing on Greece a completely new "national" musical instrument in the four-stringed bouzouki.

The role of Theodorakis in the rise and the almost equally spectacular decline of the "new wave" in Greek music has yet to be clearly defined. It is perhaps a pity that Ms Holst, in her almost exclusive focus on the personality and music of Theodorakis, tends to present his contemporaries and fellow-musicians in the guise of rivals, to whom she tries to be fair, rather than as collaborators on a common venture. Holst seems content to repeat the view of George Giannaris, whose *Mikis Theodorakis: Music and Social Change* was published in 1972, and of Theodorakis himself; that the new musical climate of the 1960s was almost solely the work of Theodorakis. There is quite a discrepancy, however, between the lyrical songs which brought fame to Theodorakis, Hadzidakis and Karakostas among others in the early 1960s, and the often naive and bombastic statements of intent of Theodorakis's published writings. It was certainly not the "metaphysical music" of Theodorakis's proclamation which changed the face of Greek music in the 1960s, and only one "metaphysical" work has ever achieved widespread recognition. This is Theodorakis's setting of the *Axion Est* of Elytis; arguably his master-

piece, a brilliant but uneven work which remains *sui generis*.

The dominant personality and prolific output of Theodorakis may have partly simplified and obscured more complex musical events. Certainly it is a weakness of Holst's book that in her examination of Theodorakis's fall from popular favour she fails to consider the fate of the musical movement with which he first won that favour. The "new wave" had spent itself shortly after 1970. Contemporaries such as Hadzidakis and Karakostas turned with varying degrees of conviction to exploring new styles, while younger figures such as Markopoulos, Savopoulos and the impressive Christodoulos Halaris have all developed in directions of their

own, so destroying the cohesiveness that had marked the decade before.

Gail Holst's book follows a biographical plan, and inevitably repeats a good deal of material already available to the English-speaking reader in Giannaris's book and in Theodorakis's *Journals of Resistance*. Unfortunately, in doing so she omits any discussion or explanation of what she rather loosely calls "Byzantine" music or of the tonality and rhythms of Greek folk music, the few examples which do illustrate Theodorakis's debt to tradition being reproduced from the manuscript facsimiles in Theodorakis's own *Mousiki via its Mazes*.

Finally, a word about politics. It

was the dictatorship of the "col- dals" in Greece from 1967 to 1974 that raised Theodorakis to international fame as a figurehead of resistance. During those years when his music was banned in Greece, a smuggled cassette or a record clandestinely played was undoubtedly a symbol, to many besides those on the Left, of absent freedom. It was certainly a moving experience to hear Theodorakis's music in Greece at that time, and it was probably the recent memory of those years, rather than enthusiasm for Theodorakis's new works such as the cacophonous *Canto General*, that brought crowds of up to 30,000 people to the football stadiums to hear them in the first months after the composer's re-

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## The divine concourse

By Wilfrid Mellers

The Complete Works of John Dowland

Recorded by Consort of Musick,  
directed by Anthony Rooley

The First Booke of Songs 1597

DSLO 508 (2 records)

The Second Booke of Songs 1600

DSLO 528 (2 records)

The Third Booke of Songs 1603

DSLO 531 (2 records)

A Pilgrimes Solace 1612

DSLO 585 (2 records)

Mr Henry Nowell Lamentations

1597/Psalms and Sacred Songs

DSLO 551

A Musical Banquet 1610

DSLO 555

Lachrimae 1604

DSLO 517

Consort Music

DSLO 533

A Miscellany

DSLO 556

Keyboard transcriptions

DSLO 552

The complete lute music

D 187 DS (5 records)

Deccan/Oiseau Lyre.

John Dowland is the greatest of English song writers: a bold claim with which few on reflection would quarrel. He is also the greatest English composer for the lute, if that is a less bold claim because the field is circumscribed, one might step it up by saying simply that he is the greatest composer for the instrument. However one rates him, there is no doubt that Dowland is an ideal subject for the currently fashionable "complete recording". There is enough of his music to make the undertaking impressive, but not so much as to make it impractical; his output is of consistently high quality so there is a minimum of dross to be borne with in the interests of comprehensiveness; his musical character is clearly defined.

Dowland was an Elizabethan whose art, like Shakespeare's, came to fruition in the time of James I. We think of him as the supreme exponent of "Jacobean melancholy", and recall the wonderfully apposite fact that he was for a period lutanist to the Danish court at Elsinore. But Anthony Rooley's new recording of Dowland's oeuvre with his Consort of Musick for the Florilegium series issued by Oiseau Lyre, is on the mark in reminding us of the emotional range of Dowland's work; and in demonstrating, through the performances, how Dowland's Hamlet-like introspection is consummated in an equilibrium of negative and positive forces. His post-Renaissance Platonism, poised between the divine and the civic, to use the contemporary terms, naturally bears on styles of performance. In the five books of ayres the music stems from private passion of considerable intensity, triggered off by words that are often poetically potent; but the spontaneity, with which lyrical phrases flow from verbal initiation, is tempered by the rhythmic interplay of the quasi-polyphonic lute part. This latent polyphony prompted Dowland to arrange some of his solo ayres as

four-voice settings, and to conceive some of his subtlest work in his last collection, *A Pilgrimes Solace*, specifically in that form. These harmonic-polyphonic ayres, in which each line has the intimate relationship to a poetic text such as characterizes the solo ayres while being simultaneously a part of a dramatically harmonic texture, are probably Dowland's supreme achievement. Significantly the poems are mostly devotional; religious experience is "personalized" as personal experience is spiritualized.

I began by thinking that a more passionate awareness in these performances of Dowland's Hamlet-like intensities would have made his ultimate physical-metaphysical equilibrium more impressive. Emma Kirkby's exquisite voice and the high intelligence of her response to words don't give her the right weight for Dowland, except in the more Italianate, elaborately ornamented masque songs, of which her performance is as near perfection as seems humanly feasible. Even David Thomas, a true lute great singer of seventeenth-century music, tends to dampen the ardour of his superb voice more than seems to me necessary; the tenor, Martyn Hill, comes closer to a fusion of vocal vibrancy with empathy, while paying deference to the implied polyphonies of the delicately

sensuous lute. Yet as the ayres slowly unfold through the five books Rooley's approach seems justified. There is no single track here that moves me to tears as do Pears's or Decker's of "In darkness let me dwell" - both of which are no doubt unauthentic. Yet a noble spirit and a visionary world are cumulatively evoked, until as climax the "spiritual madrigals" of *A Pilgrimes Solace* are magnificently performed, every vocal and instrumental strand offering its humanistic individuality to the divine concourse of the whole.

Of the discs devoted to instrumental music that of Dowland's major consort work, the *Seven Passionate Pavanes* on the Lachrimae, his most famous song then as now, was the first to be recorded, and suffers most from a deficiency of that basic earthiness which makes levitation at once more miraculous and more believable. There's not enough corporeal pulse to encourage the polyphonies airily to wing, so the effect is muted; though what the players aim at is right in principle. The five discs of lute music, on the other hand, are continuously delightful and inspiring. No fewer than five lutanists contribute, all of a technical competence inconceivable at the time I was first interested in this music, when lutes tended to cavort

like bucking broncos. Moreover, the five players exhibit a variety of approach appropriate to the range of the music. Rooley himself, who self-effacingly restricts himself to minor pieces except for the sublime *Farewell*, and Jacob Lindeberg play with a musical discretion always at the service of the music, allowing body-rhythms lyrically to flower. Nigel North is more poetic, less rhythmic and secure but subtle in nuance and timing. Anthony Baines is technically brilliant though more mannered; Christopher Wilson, the most adventurous player, sometimes loses pulse in relling in rubato and ad hoc ornamentation, though his "late" style is wonderfully persuasive in the mysterious "Forlorn Hope". In the keyboard transcriptions Colin Tilney preserves, on the "mechanized lute" which is his virginals, much of the plangency and plasticity of the lute-plucked instrument; the minor consort pieces always enliven and sometimes deeply move us.

All the music is ideally suited for playing to ourselves in a private rather than public place. Though its mood is hermetic, its healing therapy is hardly less relevant to, and perhaps more needed by, us than it was to and by those who made it, when "our" world was first in labour.

## Relative ruminations

By Gerald Abraham

PIOTR ILVICH TCHAIKOVSKY:

Letters to his Family

An Autobiography

Translated by Galina Von Meck

577pp. Dennis Dobson, £17.50.

0 234 77250 6

Tchaikovsky - or Chaykovsky as I vainly prefer to spell him - must have been one of the most voluminous of all letter-writing composers. The Russian collected edition of his letters began in 1959 already runs to 4,839, with one more volume, covering the last ten months of his life, still to come. One wonders how in thirty years he found time to compose eight symphonies and nine operas, to say nothing of concertos, full-length ballets, chamber music and much else. He was not one of the world's great letter-writers but he is always very readable, gossiping about his own music and other people's, on books read and plays seen, on his travels and troubles. And like all good letter-writers he reacts to the personality of his correspondent, though this is naturally less evident in a selection all addressed to close relatives. So one welcomes a volume of them in a serviceable, but far from immaculate, translation. (The famous mezzo Minnie Hauk appears as "Minnie Hauk" and even French words are correctly spelled by the composer as mis-spelled here.)

The history of the publication of Tchaikovsky's letters is curious. Long excerpts from many of the

family letters and those to Nadezhda von Meck and others appeared in his brother's three-volume biography of 1900-2. Other small collections of correspondence with Balakirev and Taneev followed, but scholarly publication began in 1934-6 with the three volumes of correspondence with Nadezhda von Meck edited mainly by V.A. Zhdanov, who gave Nadezhda's letters as well as Tchaikovsky's. Zhdanov followed the same principle in the first volume (1938) of correspondence with Tchaikovsky's most important publisher, Jurgenson. Next he turned to the family letters with *P.I. Chaykovsky. Pis'ma k rodinim*, 1850-1879 (1940). The war intervened. Zhdanov returned to work with the Taneev correspondence (1951) and the second Jurgenson volume (1952), but he abandoned his original "family" series. Instead, in 1955 he brought out a selection of 681 *Pis'ma k blizkim* and it is this selection that Galina von Meck has translated, with no mention of Zhdanov and without his seventy-six pages of valuable notes (though she borrows from them, also without acknowledgment) for which the "additional" annotations by Percy M. Young are a very poor and incomplete substitute. To take one example: how many readers of letter 216 will realize that *Grande Duchesse*, which Tchaikovsky had just seen, was Offenbach's *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*?

Curiosities in the publication of Tchaikovsky's letters are revealed in his 1940 volume. Zhdanov printed some very frank letters of September 1876 in which the composer confes-

sed among other things that "There are people who do not despise me for my vices only because they began to love me when they did not yet suspect that I was actually a man with a lost reputation. This is true, for instance, of Sasha [his sister]. I know that she guesses everything and forgives everything. You can imagine how terrible this is, for people to blame me and forgive me, when actually I am not to blame for anything! And isn't it an appalling thought that people dear to me are sometimes ashamed of me? But it has been so a hundred times, and will be so a hundred times in the future. In short, I should like to marry or enter into an open liaison with some woman who is not one of the most contemptible gossipers, whose opinion I do not value in the least but who can hurt those near to me. . . . I am so confirmed in my habits and tastes that it is impossible to cast them off like an old glove. Besides I am far from possessing an iron will and since writing to you I have already given way three times to my natural inclinations."

In 1955 Zhdanov omitted these letters altogether, so that the rather important confessional passages do not appear in letters to his family, which is absurdly claimed to be "an autobiography" though they were published in English nearly forty years ago. As for Russia, in 1961 N.A. Viktorova and B.I. Rabinovich published the letters in volume VI of Tchaikovsky's *Literaturnye proizvedeniya i perepiska* but excised the confessional passages.

## The generations of expansion

By D. K. Fieldhouse

ANGUS CALDER:

Revolutionary Empire

The Rise of the English-Speaking Empires from the Fifteenth Century

to the 1780s

916pp. Cape, £16.50.

0 224 01452 8

"How can one write the history of the English-speaking peoples and their empires?" asks Angus Calder in his introduction. The question would have been sharper if he had asked, "as a single continuous narrative", for that, in effect, is what he set out to do and what presents the greatest technical and conceptual problem about a book of this kind. A hundred years or so ago, of course, J. R. Seeley, founder of the modern concept of "imperial" history, saw no difficulty. For him *The Expansion of England* implied a study of how and why England emerged from the rack of those European states which had been involved in the first colonization of the new world to become, by his day, the greatest imperial power. He could construct a single central theme. England had triumphed because she was "least hampered by the Old World". Keeping her eyes firmly on her overseas interests, while her European rivals involved themselves in continental struggles, England had grown into "Greater Britain". That was her destiny, the "pregnant" essence of her history. The linear past stretched unbroken into the future.

Such unities and certainties are not available to modern historians. Too much has been written on the expansion of Europe for them to see any easy single answer to the basic question of why Britain became the leading imperial power; and the end of empire in the twentieth century has destroyed the notion of ultimate destiny. Moreover imperial history can no longer be seen as unitary, flowing from a single central situation. It was

not just England, but Scotland, Wales and Ireland that were responsible for empire-building; and the energies and activities of British people overseas - colonists in America, traders, soldiers, slave-traders, missionaries and speculators on other frontiers - can take as much responsibility for the process of expansion as the actions and policies of the British at home. Equally important was the part played by non-Europeans - Indians, Amerindians, Africans and others. So, in place of a single, simple, coherent outward thrust by the English, we now see a vastly complicated process working at both ends, centre and periphery, in which the pull was as important as the push and circumstance as decisive as intention. It is, then, still possible to attempt to write a single narrative history of the British empire? Where could one discover its unities?

Dr Calder is all too aware of these problems. His title suggests a central theme: that this was a different sort of empire whose character was, in some sense, "revolutionary"; and one expects it will provide a unifying concept. If this was intended, it is impossible to discover what this revolutionary element was, or what distinguished the British experience from that of other European imperial states: one is no wiser at the end than at the beginning. One thing simply seemed to follow another. But by then we do know a great deal about what happened between the early sixteenth century and 1783, both in Britain and the overseas possessions. Calder's style of narrative history is to divide his three-hundred-odd years into a series of short periods, each lasting about a generation. Like the individual frames in a cartoon, one period seizes dissolves into the next, creating the illusion of continuous movement. Within each frame he surveys situations and trends in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland, correctly seeing the Celtic borderlands as England's first colonies, and then describes developments in each area of overseas activity.

The first theme therefore that runs through these very diverse accounts is the enthusiasm of the officers for a life that was usually, unconquerable and lonely, and often dangerous. The second is their admiration and often affection for the men under their command. Many of them came back for a second spell - the author himself served with the Burma Rifles, the Arab Legion and the Aden Protectorate Levies - but they seem seldom to forget their first love. If a man served first with Africans, he will sometimes later concede that Arabs have many good points as soldiers, but for him there will never be anyone quite like the men of the first company he commanded.

Another theme, implicit but unstated, is the extraordinary readiness of human beings to give life-and-death devotion to officers who take care that they are properly fed and housed and who have the habit of expecting obedience. The 1st Cheshire Regiment was raised at Wei-hai-wei in 1898 and was only two years old on April 30, 1900, when turned out without warning in the early hours and marched eighteen

miles to protect from their own fellow-villagers the highly unpopular Boundary Commission which was demarcating the territory the British had just taken from China. But "not a murmur was heard".

It was an economical way of running an Empire, both in money and men. The Sudan Defence Force looked after the internal order of a country the size of Europe (without Russia) with a force of only 5,000 men. British officers were good at getting the best out of simple men who were not yet "politically aware". But neither politicians nor civil servants came well out of the scrutiny that such a book as this invites. Burke's saying about great empires and little minds cannot be avoided. There was neither foresight for the inevitable nor a concept of the empire as a whole. As late as 1941,

the virtue of this method is that it creates a strong sense of chronology. Contemporary events fit into a coherent historical situation and suggest their own logical outcome. Atmosphere is created by a multitude of deft descriptive touches and descriptions of individuals which is sometimes reminiscent of Jan Morris's style. So, almost imperceptibly, the empire evolves before our eyes until, during the generation after 1760, we come to the supreme paradox of British imperial history: the contemporaneous loss of the first empire in America and the founding of a second British empire in south Asia. At this point the book stops abruptly, to be continued in a second volume which will take the story, including that of the newly born United States, down to 1865.

To the professional historian a book of this kind presents problems, though it is clearly not written for him. One reaction is to stand amazed and humbled at how many bows his author used in writing it, how much fascinating detail he has built into it, how well the story is told and how buoyantly it carries to 800 pages of text. Another is how well Calder has understood and used the great mass of specialized material he studies, very seldom appearing to slip into factual error, to accept a discarded interpretation or to show ignorance of controversies surrounding his material. It is, in fact, difficult to think how, or by whom, such a task could have been better done.

Yet, in the end, one has to face the question: was it worth doing? What is the use of a compendious history of this kind? Does the act of pulling together a multitude of separate histories and comprehending the work of so many specialist historians (for that, in effect, is what Calder has had to do) add anything important to the existing record? At times one doubts it. The material on English history at the start of each section is so short and selective that one sniffs distastefully. Nor do these snippets of information appear, in general, to throw much light on the

promotion, better pay - usually in that order. It was a change from garrison life and the long wait for permanent command of a company; it might be an escape from a love affair or from debt; but essentially it was the romantic choice of a man in search of adventure. All true soldiers are romantics at heart; it is not surprising therefore that many of those who went to "scallywag soldiering" when they were subalterns reached high rank. The Royal West African Frontier Force attracted Trenchard, Stockwell, Lathbury, Read, all of whom became full generals or above; both Ismay and Carton de Wiart were with the Somaliland Camel Corps in 1914.

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Another theme, implicit but unstated, is the extraordinary readiness of human beings to give life-and-death devotion to officers who take care that they are properly fed and housed and who have the habit of expecting obedience. The 1st Cheshire Regiment was raised at Wei-hai-wei in 1898 and was only two years old on April 30, 1900, when turned out without warning in the early hours and marched eighteen

miles to protect from their own fellow-villagers the highly unpopular Boundary Commission which was demarcating the territory the British had just taken from China. But "not a murmur was heard".

It was an economical way of running an Empire, both in money and men. The Sudan Defence Force looked after the internal order of a country the size of Europe (without Russia) with a force of only 5,000 men. British officers were good at getting the best out of simple men who were not yet "politically aware". But neither politicians nor civil servants came well out of the scrutiny that such a book as this invites. Burke's saying about great empires and little minds cannot be avoided. There was neither foresight for the inevitable nor a concept of the empire as a whole. As late as 1941,

the virtue of this method is that it creates a strong sense of chronology. Contemporary events fit into a coherent historical situation and suggest their own logical outcome. Atmosphere is created by a multitude of deft descriptive touches and descriptions of individuals which is sometimes reminiscent of Jan Morris's style. So, almost imperceptibly, the empire evolves before our eyes until, during the generation after 1760, we come to the supreme paradox of British imperial history: the contemporaneous loss of the first empire in America and the founding of a second British empire in south Asia. At this point the book stops abruptly, to be continued in a second volume which will take the story, including that of the newly born United States, down to 1865.

To the professional historian a book of this kind presents problems, though it is clearly not written for him. One reaction is to stand amazed and humbled at how many bows his author used in writing it, how much fascinating detail he has built into it, how well the story is told and how buoyantly it carries to 800 pages of text. Another is how well Calder has understood and used the great mass of specialized material he studies, very seldom appearing to slip into factual error, to accept a discarded interpretation or to show ignorance of controversies surrounding his material. It is, in fact, difficult to think how, or by whom, such a task could have been better done.

Yet, in the end, one has to face the question: was it worth doing? What is the use of a compendious history of this kind? Does the act of pulling together a multitude of separate histories and comprehending the work of so many specialist historians (for that, in effect, is what Calder has had to do) add anything important to the existing record? At times one doubts it. The material on English history at the start of each section is so short and selective that one sniffs distastefully. Nor do these snippets of information appear, in general, to throw much light on the

promotion, better pay - usually in that order. It was a change from garrison life and the long wait for permanent command of a company; it might be an escape from a love affair or from debt; but essentially it was the romantic choice of a man in search of adventure. All true soldiers are romantics at heart; it is not surprising therefore that many of those who went to "scallywag soldiering" when they were subalterns reached high rank. The Royal West African Frontier Force attracted Trenchard, Stockwell, Lathbury, Read, all of whom became full generals or above; both Ismay and Carton de Wiart were with the Somaliland Camel Corps in 1914.

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# A voice against the Vatican

By J. S. Coventry

ROBERT NOWELL:  
A Passion for Truth  
Hans Küng: A Biography  
377pp. Collins, £9.95.  
0 00 215056 5

The trouble with this very informed, informative and well-written book is that it verges on the biographical. With little mention of other theologians who have forestalled or coincided with Hans Küng's ideas, a misleading impression is left of a wholly lone and original voice. And if an author treats his subject with hardly a breath of criticism, this is liable to make the reader, however much he may be on Küng's side on substantial issues, become somewhat critical himself.

Hans Küng is a very attractive man. He has enormous vitality and stamina. His output has been prodigious. He has raised and vigorously pronounced upon every issue which has been of importance to the Catholic church in a generation. After *Justification*, a strictly theological work reconciling Catholic and Protestant views on the Reformation issue, he told the Vatican Council what it should discuss and how it should set about it in *Structures of the Church* and *The Church*. With a keen pastoral sense he has written, not so much to advance the frontiers

of learning as to make Christian belief alive, intelligible, not something to be apologized for, to the non-specialist reader: which accounts for his (sometimes tediously) didactic manner. He is unreservedly a Catholic and a priest and, particularly in *On Being a Christian* (720 pp), he has excellently fulfilled his vocation and helped (for a theologian) astronomical numbers of readers to bring their faith alive in our time. In *Does God Exist?* (840 pp) he has given a most comprehensive survey of philosophy of religion since this has existed in its modern form, and exactly delimited the grounds - as he sees them - for a positive answer. He fights his critics; he gives no quarter whatever: he shows every sign (it really does seem fair to say) of enjoying the fight. He is quite capable of looking after himself. And his brushes with the German bishops and the Roman authorities have helped rather than hindered, I will not say his sales, but his theological mission.

It is ironic that his worst book, *Infidelity*, caused the most trouble and eventually led to the disciplinary action of December 1979. (It does not do to write a book with a chip on your shoulder: see the truculent introduction. The same is true of *Truthfulness*.) Küng asks the right questions; he pokes a strong finger into the weaknesses of the doctrine of infallibility. But few critics thought he had produced any answers. And an obvious philosophical weakness embarrassed his

supporters: his notion of "a priori infallible propositions" is philosophically preposterous and misrepresents the Fathers of Vatican I, who said that the persons were infallible and the propositions irreformable; what ever they may mean it was not a venture into linguistic analysis sixty years ahead of its time. Rome moved into action against the book on its publication in 1970, as being clearly against the teaching of Vatican I and II, but, having failed to get any straight answers from Küng, called a truce in 1975, because of Paul VI's reluctance to cause divisions in the Church, on the understanding that Küng, if he would not recant, would at least pipe down. He was "bound over to be of good behaviour". Not a bit of it. He proceeded to underline objections to the Church's stance on its teaching authority in various publications, and threw in a very critical assessment of John Paul II's first year for good measure. Bull by him, you may say. Worse was to come. In *On Being a Christian* (German edition 1974) Küng, clearly on the side of the resurrection, was evasive on the divinity of Christ and remained so in all the subsequent showers of statements from either side, a far more serious matter than infallibility, but not connected. How reliable has the Church's accepted teaching from the earliest centuries proved to be? Was Küng a liberal Protestant (so Rahner said, in an off moment) interpreting Scripture in the light of modern thought, without concern for

the creeds and Church pronouncements that came in between? Never had Roman doctrinal authority been more patient, moderate, tolerant. No bad thing, of course. Neither Rome nor the German bishops ever got an answer to the question they put. Küng objected to the procedures and to the naivety of the questions. He advocated more enlightened procedures. He would be happy to enter on a theological discussion (with suitably qualified persons) in order to advance mutual understanding. Theological questions could only be settled by theological arguments, not by disciplinary procedures. He utterly, and rightly, rejected any suggestion of disloyalty to the Church. At the end of the day he lost his authorization from Rome to teach as a Catholic theologian in a Catholic Faculty. He nearly took the matter to court, but accepted the compromise of retaining his chair at Tübingen, and the direction of the Ecumenical Institute he had built up, outside the Catholic Faculty and immediately under university authority. Could Rome have done less, or is this a whiff of the Inquisition? It has not harmed his reputation as a theologian. He is now more secure in his professional post, and at least as free to speak and write as before.

Neither Küng nor Robert Nowell has faced the basic issue. Bishops, too, can have a passion for truth as they see it. There are at least two sorts of authority in the Church, that of responsible office and that of learning (that of prophetic holiness is

perhaps a third): the former is a conserving role, the latter pioneering. As they cannot be reduced to one, they are almost certain to be in tension and may at some points clash; and it is naive to be surprised or hurt about it, if they do. If, in the name of intellectual freedom, at no point or in no way whatever may bishops (or church synods) call theologians to order, then it is absurd to mouth the idea that they have an official responsibility for preserving the Church in the apostolic faith: they cannot have any such responsibility, if they are denied any and every means of fulfilling it. Küng was at fault in insisting that his views should only be challenged by bishops if they could refute his grounds for asserting them: that is to reduce the role of bishops to that of theologians. It is very regrettable that the way in which Catholic bishops seek to fulfil their responsibility as guardians of the faith should itself be made part of the faith to be guarded, so that all the logical and doctrinal anomalies of "infallibility", and a vicious circle, should add their difficulties to an already difficult matter, instead of its being treated as a profoundly important pastoral question: namely, how in this day and age are bishops to fulfil their proper function and responsibility, when blue murder is shrieked if they do anything at all? Küng and Nowell leave the question on the table, and critics of the Küng affair in other Churches have not offered any answer either.

## Divine condescension

By Alberic Stacpoole

RODERICK STRANGE:  
Newman and the Gospel of Christ  
200pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £12.50.  
0 19 826718 5

This book joins another respected study of Newman in the Oxford Theological Monograph series, R. C. Selby's *The Principle of Reserve in the Writings of John Henry Newman*. Like the other, it began as a doctoral thesis; it brought Roderick Strange (now at the Oxford Chaplaincy, but then at Oriel College) to the heart of Newman's spirituality. His Christology stems from "those burning truths which I learned when a boy from evangelical teaching" upon the divinity, atonement, real presence and communion in the two natures. Newman remained with Athanasius from 1830 throughout his life, publishing his last work upon that great anti-Arian.

His study of Christ's divinity began in earnest with a book published in 1832, which placed him in the front of patristic studies: *The Arians of the Fourth Century*. There he set out as his principal theme the *principle of reserve* of the Father, showing the necessary subordination of Son and Word without prejudice to perfect unity in equality. Father is ever with Son; for generation is eternal, not temporal. It is hard for the human mind to hold such seeming contradictions together, though the religious mind may assent to each: "the full number of propositions, one by one, in which, when viewed together, the whole doctrine and mystery consists" is the object Newman calls for consideration.

We are taken steadily through the process of Newman's christology, with rich examples to root it in his utterances. We are shown how intent Newman was on identifying the eternal Son with the incarnate; on presenting Christ as man's "pattern specimen" from which spiritual life flows; on discussing the apparent impossibilities that the two natures impose, the human being an "adjunct of God the Word"; on facing the problem of the supposed two minds of Christ, "two different ranges of thought"; on Christ's manhood-but-sinlessness, which could share only those infirmities that were not sinful.

The sufferings of the divine Christ are explored, Newman showing that they only served to intensify the human experience of suffering, since "God suffered in his human nature". The doctrine of the atonement took Newman much longer to explore, partly because it was subjected to his

theory of reserve - it was a mystery "to be adored secretly". The two ideas met in Newman's insistence that the suffering Christ was more than exemplar: "his sufferings must be adored as our atonement, not our pattern".

Newman is seen here working out his theology of divine condescension, of the divinization of man through his relationship with the humanity of Jesus. This is accomplished after Pentecost through the Spirit, sent not to supply Christ's absence but to accomplish his presence, that as a mystical indwelling of Christ in the believer.

There is nothing new to Catholic ears in Newman's long worked-out christology, except the immediacy, the beauty and the powerful appeal in the way he presented it. The evidence of that remains in Fr Strange's book, a gift for us all.

often reached surprisingly quickly) as precisely that - vague and formless. In this characteristic, at least, one wonders whether TM and "Christian" prayer are as divorced as Mother Mary Clare would have them.

This latter point is scarcely a criticism that could be levelled at Donald Nicholl's *Holiness*. Where Mother Mary Clare draws selectively on one tradition, Nicholl draws eclectically on at least five. It is to be regretted that some of the characteristics of "holiness" and he does so by means of anecdote and vignette, quoting from Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu sources, as well as autobiographical material. The result is often astonishingly refreshing and profound; and yet there is also a strong smudge of Pelagianism about it all, a suggestion that prayer is really about self-cultivation. ("Each person... has to work on himself. No one else can do it for him.") And along with this spiritual athleticism (it comes as no surprise to hear that the author goes jogging even when on holiday in the Holy Land) goes an apparent naivety about the role of suffering in the spiritual life. Discussion of this, significantly, is left to the very last chapter, and then with the heavy suggestion that it can be reserved for the day when one is "noised" for it. Mother Mary Clare's *Encountering the Depths* harbours no such illusions.

## Praying powerfully

By Sarah Coakley

MARY CLARE:  
Encountering the Depths  
Edited by Ralph Townsend  
81pp. Darton, Longman and Todd. £1.99.  
0 232 51510 7

DONALD NICHOLL:  
Holiness  
159pp. Darton, Longman and Todd. £3.99.  
0 232 514976

In contrast to many of the recent books on Christian spirituality, Mother Mary Clare's *Encountering the Depths* provides the distillation of a lifetime's experience as an (Anglican) contemplative and spiritual director, and of her mode of expression is at times a little stiff, it is the stiffness of that slightly awesome, never-thin of stilled rigidity. Her central themes are familiar enough: that prayer is a "love affair" with God; that it is both initiated and sustained by God and not by pure human effort; that it is not about emotional fireworks but a "maturing of the will; that solitude and silence are vital for its growth; and that it is vital for any "mission and renewal". There is nothing strikingly new here; but there is an unmistakable note of authority in Mother Mary Clare's writing, and the occasional, startlingly practical insight or application, that makes this something of a miniature modern classic.

Nonetheless, there are some possible points of criticism. For instance, the author appeals frequently to "the Christian tradition of prayer" as if it were a unified phenomenon (surely a vast oversimplification); and in fact, if I have read her aright, there is an interesting convergence of diverse influences in her writing: the Carmelite St Teresa and St John above all, but with a fascinating admixture from Orthodox hesychast traditions about the positive role of the body in prayer, and also a strongly affective, Christocentric streak which perhaps betrays a more direct personal influence from Gilbert Shaw (author of *The Face of Love* and Warden to the SLG Convent in Oxford - in the 1960s). So we have here not one, "unbroken chain of spirituality", but an impressive concretion from fairly divergent sources.

Another area in which one would have welcomed more conscious precision is that of the theory of intercessory prayer. It is clear that contemplative prayer, specifically, is regarded as powerful in intercession. ("The love of God flows in contemplation, and the love of Christ flows out") so that "giving ourselves unconditionally to God [we make] a space in which divine love can surround the person for whom we pray". But Mother Mary Clare remains disappointingly enigmatic about the metaphysical bases on which this practice of contemplative intercession supposedly rests. Is it claimed (as it seems to be) that the contemplative religious has some special power to shift or intensify the locus of divine energy? If so, how odd if a subject such as this were not shrouded in at least some mystery. But one senses that the author is simply making the (misplaced?) assumption that her readership will both understand and concur.

Finally, it is disappointing, too, to find Mother Mary Clare making some faintly paranoid remarks about traditions of prayer other than the strictly "Christian". "Our danger", she says at one point, "is that we run the risk of drifting into a vague, formless 'prayer' all too... loosely called contemplation. Christian prayer must never be confused with Transcendental Meditation". Of course, Mother Mary Clare is worrying about dangers for *beginners* in prayer here. But she fails to acknowledge that her own prime authority, St John of the Cross, describes the arid prayer of the "night of the senses" (a stage, he says, that is

often reached surprisingly quickly) as precisely that - vague and formless. In this characteristic, at least, one wonders whether TM and "Christian" prayer are as divorced as Mother Mary Clare would have them.

The closing paper fittingly gave an overview of the conference's theme: U. P. Burke on "Ritual and anti-ritual in early modern Europe". From Luther to Thorstein Veblen he cited a dazzling display of participants in "the great debate", those who criticize and those who defend ritual. Paradoxically, many of those who would eliminate it often set up substitute rituals of their own. Yet clearly in modern times, he argued, our "ethological turn of mind" - seeing ourselves as though we were others - is inimical to ritual.

## commentary

### Newt for your comfort

By Harold Hobson

War with the News  
Riverside Studios

If Ken Campbell were a director of non-fashionable plays in a theatre on the Left Bank, he would be one of the great names in European drama. But the greatest of names can experience shipwreck, and at the end of the first act of his production of *War with the News*, adapted from Karel Capek by Kenny Murray, I thought he was well and truly sunk. I can think of few exhibitions of incompetence as pitiful as those Campbell presents to us in the opening half of his play.

They remind me of Swinburne's admirable comments on his own poetry:

If a person conceives an opinion  
That my verses are stuff that  
will wash,  
Or my muse has one plume on her  
pinion,  
That person's opinion is bosh.  
My philosophy, politics, free  
thought  
Are worth not three skips of a  
flea,  
And the emptiest thoughts that  
can be thought  
Are mine on the sea.

Campbell's thoughts are that the sea is full of news, amiable creatures who at the Riverside Studios swim in a great tank of tepid water which

they splash onto the audience - especially when the Prince of Wales and Lady Diana jump in to join them, and later when, in a scene of Jules Vernian horror, Enoch Powell, up to his waist in water, and with a mad gleam in his eye, strangles one of them after a terrifying struggle. That is genuine good stuff, but to get to it you have to endure the agonies of the first act, and these are indeed awful, relieved only by the marvellous Mick Lawson's delivery of a speech by the Queen, and a juggling act, simple and inexplicably sad, made by two news just before royalty enters.

There are six television sets at the back of the stage, and on them selected news reports themselves. A decrepit old stone-age man comes on and talks unintelligibly. Then arrive two middle-aged and nearly naked chaps, one of whom squirts down and defeats. He does this rather vividly, and calls his companion to examine the product of his exertions. This scene is disgusting, and quite irrelevant to the subject of the play, which is a study, not of a primitive world without luxuries, but of the problems of immigration and violence. But it is better than the old man, for you can at least understand it.

After that, we get discussions of the immigration of news in an American business conference, where their possible economic benefits are discussed, and also in the House of Commons. It is in the Commons scene that the production

sinks to its lowest point. The trouble is not that one can accuse Campbell of partiality, for he deals with all parties with an even-handed injustice that is nevertheless quite good-humoured (though not so amiable as his treatment of royalty, which throughout, though disrespectful, remains enamoured). The unwise proceeds from the fact that most of the players appear completely uninterested. There are caricatures of Hattersley, Foot, Thatcher, Muggerside, Heseltine, Paisley, Healey (particularly inept), and several other politicians which would be regarded as incompetent in a third-rate university revue that had been chucked out of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

In this second act all the players, even those who have been so futile in the first, come into their own, and the play gets down to business. In a television interview, Andy Rashleigh's Michael Foot rejoices in the splendid economic success of his new Socialist government, which has introduced a ten-hour week by making news do all the work. But the news revolt, and there is guerrilla-fighting. Terror seizes the British, the American and Soviet governments. The news topple civilization. There are agonised consultations round Sir Robin Day at the microphone. Chaos grows ever wilder: panic sweeps through the theatre. The actor playing Mr Powell (unidentifiable from the programme) presents a man of intellect and fanaticism, the only politician introduced to us by the play who can rival the great and often terrifying statesmen of the past. He alone shows himself capable of action, and in theatrical terms becomes what the creators of the piece can hardly have intended, the play's solitary figure of the old heroic and alarming stature.

The ending is superb. Campbell has the gift of uniting slapstick and vulgarity with lyrical tenderness, resignation and beauty. When the news finally destroy our civilization, Malcolm Muggerside and Robin Day (Don Crann and Jonathan Barlow) are left, all else atomized, paddling an inflated dinghy on a piece of black water, what plangent, yearning, mournful music fills the theatre. Muggerside remains happily confident that God will arrange for the news to make a better job of the world than we have done; Day desperately rows, shattered that England will never be again. It is an inspired scene, absurd, masterly and incapable of rational explanation.

### The way it was

By Stoddard Martin

How I Got That Story  
Hampstead Theatre

A keen young American reporter is sent to "Amboland" to cover the war between Communist guerrillas and the GI-supported régime of Mme Ing. On his first day he is trying to capture the picturesque atmosphere of a pagoda when a Buddhist priest appears with a petrol can and immolates himself. "I could have done something," the reporter muses; "but that would have been unethical." Mme Ing is not so charmingly naive. "You were responsible for that barbecue," she charges. The reporter protests his blamelessness, but the lady points out that such acts have no effect unless "covered".

Later in the play the reporter "goes native" and is captured by the guerrillas. "You have no right to be here," their leader tells him; "we're just a spectacle to you." The reporter protests that all he ever found out by being a reporter was that "you never find out anything." The guerrilla leader is not mollified. "Your position in my country is morbid and decadent," he charges; "we should kill you as we pick insects from the skin of a valuable animal." Instead the guerrillas hold him for an improbably large ransom. The reporter's company antes up in hopes of scooping "a four or maybe even a six part feature." Mme Ing and the guerrillas are confirmed in their analyses of the parasitic role of the Western media.

The play returns to this theme from time to time; the heart of the matter, however, is the reporter's drift into disillusionment. The script is theatrical and verbally sensational. It is performed with élan by Ron Cook and Robert Lindsey, who accomplish the feat rare among British actors of speaking American slang accurately. The bare pine-wood set looks striking, is functional, and smells lovely too. The lighting is effective, especially the tiny spots edging the central platform, which transforms it into a runway. Music is limited to a leitmotif, a gurgle of Rolling Stones songs when the native bay-boys appear. In this, and other details, the play is faithful to the way

which his wife and star, Sally Miles (Julie Andrews), will have to abandon her Peter Pan image for something more risqué. Negotiations and double-dealing with the studio ensue, but Felix is doomed. All that remains is for his three best friends, a director (William Holden), a doctor (Robert Preston) and an agent (Robert Webber) to pool what is left of their self-respect and save what is left of Felix from a hypocritical Hollywood empy.

The most obvious aspect of *S.O.B.* is that it has a lot of plot, and a lot of characters who do a lot of talking. Edwards, after all, is not only the film's director but its writer and producer, which gives him more control, and room for indulgence, than poor Felix and his friends ever achieve. Initially, Edwards uses this proliferating material to good effect by creating a kind of double plot. Parallel to Felix's tribulations is the suffering of an anonymous individual who collapses on a beach with a fatal heart attack, crawls for a while in the sand unnoticed by anyone but his bedraggled dog, is washed out by the tide then washed back in again, and finally found to be another Hollywood casualty: a forgotten old actor. The heartlessness (and muteness) of this running gag perfectly complements the craziness (and sententiousness) encouraged elsewhere. The two strands of plot come together in the film's very last shot, in a characteristic moment of sweet black, or jet pink, comedy.

This structural gag aside, much in *S.O.B.* seems out of control; or rather, Edwards's personal spleen often gets the better of his comic sensibility. The garrulousness of the characters sounds uncomfortably like self-pity. Edwards, who might have been born to deal with this subject, now seems too close to it to see it clearly. The sympathy he extends to Holden, Mulligan and the assorted old hands choking on sour grapes is a lapse not so much of taste as of comic form. The film is at once prickly and pugnacious (unfair to see anyone or anything in too bad a light) and yet defensive and self-satisfied (the last people the makers expect to see in such a light are themselves). The film's other personal preoccupation - the revamping of Julie Andrews's screen image - also comes to a dubious climax in the transformation of Mary Poppins into a *Playboy* centrefold.

A season of films by Blake Edwards is on at the National Film Theatre until the end of July.

it was. Nor is Vietnam the only place where GIs did "short time" with "little brown fucking machines" while propping up Mme Ing-type régimes: the "lifestyle" continues in Mme Marcos's country.

This fact perhaps justifies the author's otherwise coy decision to name Vietnam "Amboland". Anlin Gray's talents with language and evocation, however, are not enough to obscure his moral lapse in the end. Apparently he stopped writing where his memory of the physical experience of Vietnam broke off. But what of the psychic reverberations of that experience over the following decade? This play wants a third act, exploring the further stage reached by characters like the reporter after optimism and catharsis were passed through. Can it really be that the main thing Gray's generation gleaned from Vietnam was simply that it was "a long, strange trip, man"? Alas, perhaps. Every evening for twenty years, including during that dark period, the great father of American TV, Walter Cronkite, ended his news broadcast with the immobilizing homily: "And that's the way it is."